# Simulating the essence of negotiation

## - transforming lived experience

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May 2007

# Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Associate Professor Dr. Thomas Hoff for inviting me to participate in this project. Further I thank the department of psychology for enabling such a project by the establishment of the innovation lab and providing us with the necessary equipment.

Thanks are due also to my advisor Kjell Ivar Øvergard and co-advisor Cato A. Bjørkli for their valuable contributions and guidance. Also thank you to Agnes Andenæs and Benedicte Biørnstad for taking their time out of a busy schedule to discuss and comment upon some of the work presented here.

Thank you to all the participants who with such an enthusiasm and interest gladly contributed with their time and knowledge. I would especially like to thank the six participants who provided me with such interesting material to build my work on. Also thanks to NetLife Research for the use of their facilities.

A big thanks to my supportive family and understanding friends. A special thanks to Bengt Ekelberg for his enduring patience and loving advice.

A very special thanks to all the members and dear friends of Simoveo – Benedicte, Kjell-Are, Paul Andreas and Kjell-Morten; you have made this year such a memorable one.

# Abstract

Motivated by the challenge of combining psychological theories and methods with high-tech gaming and simulating technology, a project was carried out to develop a simulator that could train people in the skill of negotiation. An analysis of the existing theory, interviews with experienced negotiators and observations of negotiation in action formed the basis for a User Centred Design process. Through the application of Contextual Design methods, traditional qualitative methods, and a Usability test, this process has currently resulted in the overall design of a training program and an early design prototype. This work is described in the following document. As well as this six professional Norwegian negotiators have been interviewed in order to investigate how they experience negotiation on a daily basis. By the means of an interpretive phenomenological analysis their narratives have been reduced into meaning units comprising what the informants' narratives have had in common. These meaning units are tied together in a common descriptive statement discussed in relation to main theoretical currents within negotiation theory. This study has two main findings. First, how negotiation can be looked upon as a process where two or more parties move towards finding and owning a common solution by the means of communication. In other words, that negotiation is characterised by three themes; negotiation is a process, the solution must be common, and the importance of communication. The second finding is how these three themes are themselves distinguished by specific situational, inter-personal, and personal characteristics.

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# Simulating Skills

## —exploring skill development through the design of a game-based training simulator

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# Preface

This document is the end result of a research project conducted by five master’s students in Psychology. As individuals we were united by the common wish to use the thesis as an opportunity to produce something other than the traditional research we had worked on earlier in our academic careers. We saw a need for a more practical approach to research within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of Oslo, a need we strongly wanted to address. Doing research that would apply psychological theory to an everyday work situation was something that was important to us, as well as developing a product that could benefit an end-user.

There are many areas where this type of research is needed but seldom carried out, which served as an inspiration for us. It is not difficult to speculate as to at least one of the reasons why this type of research is so seldom done. The level of innate insecurity is high, demanding that any researcher throws him/herself out into the unknown without a safety net. For us this knowledge served not as a hindrance but as something exhilarating. Knowing that we would be able to carry out exploratory research and break new ground within our academic field was an inspiration to all of us. In addition to breaking new ground theoretically, embarking on this journey as a group was an innovation in itself. We knew that this would allow us to acquire skills within the area of teamwork and at the same time to develop and grow as individuals.

In the document “Simulating Skills—exploring skill development through the design of a game-based training simulator” the group’s work is described, giving a detailed picture of both what we did, how we did it, and why we chose the methods we did. The document is divided into two, with the first section detailing our activities in chronological order. In the spirit of Action Research this part is important in order to fully comprehend our focus on the procedural aspects of our work. The processes were in and of themselves considered part of our project and therefore explaining them is of central importance. The second part of the document is dedicated to presenting the methods we used in the development of our product. The User Centred Design process that was gone through is described, as well as the methodological choices we made throughout the project period.

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# From idea to simulator

## *Initiating the project*

On February 8., 2006 a group of seven master's students were presented with an idea for a possible master thesis project at a meeting at the Department of Psychology, University of Oslo. Associate professor Thomas Hoff initiated this gathering, having met the students through his work as a lecturer in Work- and Organizational Psychology on the master's degree. At the meeting he presented the concept of developing a game-based work simulator founded on relevant psychological theory, through User Centred Design methods[1]. On the basis of this raw sketch six of the students committed themselves within a few weeks to this project, and formed the group MOP (Master Oppgave Prosjektet)[2]. During this spring the students met regularly as MOP in addition to finishing their obligatory courses in Work- and Organizational Psychology and Quantitative- and Qualitative Methods. The students met again after summer break and early that autumn we decided to change our name to Simoveo, which is the name of the group today.

At the first meeting we were presented with the idea of developing a work simulator based on gaming technology. The question in focus was whether it would be possible to combine high-tech simulating technology with basic organisational theory, cognitive psychology and human factors. In his presentation Hoff used as examples large international companies as potential users of such a simulator. It was suggested that the simulator could be sold to the end users in the different firms. After extensive simulator training the employees would develop skills they could use in their professional lives. This concept was presented both as a research project and as a potential business idea.

Three ideas as to the content of the simulator were introduced; negotiation technique, decision making, and conflict management. At the group meetings of spring 2006 additional ideas were developed and worked on. The concept of making a simulator in order to learn or practice on different skills was the foundation for the group's further work on developing and brainstorming new ideas. Spanning as wide and broad as possible the group wanted to explore

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[1] These methods are described in a later section of this document.

[2] The group was later reduced to five students and this will be elaborated on later in this document.

the academic and business potential of the different ideas and also explore the excitement the different ideas evoked in the group.

Additionally and in parallel with developing different ideas concerning the simulator, the group members started to orientate themselves towards different areas of individual focus. This process started off with a workshop in mid-April 2006 where the group members were invited to reflect upon their possible future roles in the project. Three main focus areas were outlined; business, management, and sales; design and development; and the theoretical and scientific content of the simulator. This workshop put focus on important topics and aggregated questions that the group had to spend time discussing and working on during this spring. It was important to decide what roles the different members should have, and how and in what ways the different group members could complement each other. Should the different theses be dependent or independent of each other, dependent or independent of the product? Who wanted to write about what? The dynamics of this process developed over time. The result of this is reflected in the individual sections of the theses.

## *Deciding on an idea*

The group had its first official meeting in the middle of August. We picked up on the work we had started before the summer break and continued the process of developing ideas for the simulator and individual suggestions for master's theses. (For a detailed plan of our work, see Appendix A.)

During the summer the University had made a decision to allocate one of its rooms to innovation, and they put this room at our disposal for the duration of the project. The innovation lab contained working areas for all of the group members, presentation and technical equipment, as well as plenty of wall space suitable for our creative processes[3].

A workshop was arranged in order to focus on the process aspects of the groups' work. It was important to reach a decision concerning the roles of the different members of the project, as well as spending time on deciding on rules for intra-group interaction. In order to facilitate this work, our focus was to compose a group statement that included this information as well as decision-making protocols, visions and future goals.

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[3] An illustration of the importance of the walls will be given in a later section of this document.

In the process of developing ideas for the content of the simulator, the group made a list of different criteria regarding the development of the simulator. Our goal was to attempt to develop a product within an area that would not be considered controversial in the sense that psychological theory would be used to take advantage of or manipulate specific groups. In addition, the developed product needed to be firmly grounded in academic theory. The project had to be manageable within the scope of the project period and within the existing knowledge in the group and/or the knowledge within the reach of the group for instance through the network of personal contacts of each group member. It had to be manageable regarding technology as well, and the use of technology should be looked upon as valuable in itself. There also had to exist a demand in the marketplace for the simulator and a potential for profit. Additionally, it was important for the group to carry out a project we believed in and one on a topic we considered fun. We wanted the project to be meaningful both for each of the group's members but also serve a greater purpose. The reason for this list was to ensure that we at all times focused on what we regarded as important and that we continuously included these reflections in our work.

As already mentioned, the group had taken on a broad perspective and aimed widely in their work on developing ideas for the simulator. To this end the group had several brainstorming sessions where lists of potential ideas for the simulator were the end product. From this list, that at one point contained over twenty ideas, the group considered each idea thoroughly in order to eliminate the ones that were of least interest. This elimination process resulted in a list of eight ideas. At one point it was decided that the group should split into three teams and rotate the different ideas between them. Inspired by parallel design (Nielsen, 1994), this was carried out to expand on the different ideas as effectively as possible, and also to avoid anyone having personal favourites. In order for the different teams to inform each other about the different findings and developments of ideas, the group had dedicated meetings where we all gathered and new material was presented, evaluated and elaborated on with pros and cons. The different ideas were also evaluated against the list of criteria already mentioned. The goal of this process was to eliminate ideas or try to incorporate parts of the eliminated ideas into new ones. The core activity was consolidating ideas with the ultimate aim of ending up with three main ideas. These three would represent an aggregate of the best of the whole pool.

At the same time as the group developed the different ideas they continuously consulted research literature and different references and Internet sites in order to find out what had already been done in the different areas and on the different topics. This included a presentation of a similar project conducted by a research group in the U.S. (Aldrich, 2004).

In parallel with the work detailed above, each group member worked on his or her individual project description that was to be handed in mid-September. The members presented their outlines to each other in order to coordinate their writings with the group.

Early in September, three weeks into the semester, the group was reduced from six to five members as one of the students decided to quit the project. It was then up to the rest of the group to make a decision on which one of the three remaining ideas to move forward with. A panel of in-house experts was invited to give us input on the remaining ideas and comment on which of the three was the one with the greatest potential. The panel's evaluation coincided with the evaluations of the group itself, and when choosing which of the three ideas to develop, the decision fell unanimously on the negotiation simulator. Developing a negotiation simulator was from now on the main focus of the groups work.

## *Exploring the idea*

Different topics and questions emerged as the group started working on the negotiation idea. Important questions were how many users should be able to play the game simultaneously—one or many users at the same time, whether the user(s) should be alone in the game or interact with some of the other users in order to achieve a common goal or not, or just play against the machine, or perhaps both? The group discussed the possibility of making different versions of the negotiation game implementing different alternatives to the issues that were discussed. Additionally the question regarding whether we should have one or more moderators and the degree of their involvement, was addressed. We also focused on what the main learning outcome of the simulator training would be, and brainstormed ideas regarding the best technical solutions. As well as that, we decided to implement some of the most promising features of one of the other ideas that we had already eliminated. Our aim was to implement as much psychological theory as possible both in the simulator itself and in the training course package.

The group then repeated the successful method of dividing itself into smaller groups in order to work on different topics regarding simulation and negotiation in parallel. One group focused on negotiation and explored the literature in order to gain an overview of the main theories and research. The other group researched the topic of simulation and learning effects of using simulators in training. An extensive literature search was needed in order to gather information about these topics. Evaluating these searches as well as identifying literature of particular interest was focused on (Aldrich, 2005; Allen, 2003; Balachandra, Bordone, Menkel-Meadow, Ringstrom, & Sarath, 2005; Max H. Bazerman, 2006; Cohen, 2002; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Florea, Boyer, Brown, Butler, Hernandez, Weir, Meng, Johnson, Lima, & Mayall, 2003; Gentner, Loewenstein, & Thompson, 2003; Gillespie, Thompson, Loewenstein, & Gentner, 1999; Hunsaker, Whitney, & Hunsaker, 1983; Poole, 2004; Quinn, 2005; Reeves, Wellman, & Grosof, 2002; Reilly, 2005; Schweitzer & DeChurch, 2001; Stark, Fam, Waller, & Tian, 2005; Suchman, 1987; Vecchi, Hasselt, & Romano, 2005; Watkins, 1999). Several books were also summarised in presentations, in an attempt to discover the overreaching themes and directions within negotiation (M. H. Bazerman & Neale, 1992; Fisher & Ury, 1981; Karass, 1970; Kochan & Lipsky, 2003; Kremenyuk, 2002; Marsh, 1984; Plous, 1993; Pruitt, 1981; Raiffa, 1982, , 2002; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Steele, Murphy, & Russill, 1989; L. L. Thompson, 2001; Von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1953; Walton & McKersie, 1991). The results of these searches were presented to the group with the aim of keeping all the members fully apprised of each other’s findings. Several presentations were held by the group members, for instance on the topic of the McGill Negotiation Simulator used at the University in Canadian by the same name (Rosser, Lynch, Cuddihy, Gentile, & Klonsky, 2007; Roston, 1994) and articles or books considered to be of particular interest to the group at the stage we were; trying to introduce ourselves quickly to the central themes in negotiation research (Boven & Thompson, 2003; Brett & Gelfand, 2004; Loewenstein & Thompson, 2000; McAndrew & Phillips, 2005; Nadler, Thompson, & Boven, 2003; Poitras & Bowen, 2002; Shapiro, 2002; L. Thompson, 1990a, , 1990b). Literature searches, reading and updating on articles, books and journals were part of ongoing processes that involved all members of the group.

As well as familiarising ourselves with the literature we needed to get to know the future users of the simulator. In accordance with the User Centred Design paradigm, we carried out a workshop in order to define our typical user. Our target user was defined as male/female and of 25 to 45 years of age. Nationality would be primarily Norwegian and he/she would speak both Norwegian and English, having completed high school. His/her field of occupation would be as a professional, primarily but not exclusively within the field of advertising, consulting, telecoms, accounting, law, sales, media, IT, or human relations. The relevant segments would be management, employees and even whole departments. Regarding experience with the domain of negotiation, the user would not need to have any academic background and could have varying practical experience. In the area of technological skills the user would need some basic computer skills and need to be familiar with the Windows and/or Macintosh interface. S/he would not need experience with games.

When it comes to the motivation for wanting to use the simulator, our main group of users would most likely participate in order to learn skills they consider to be useful and important. Some participants, however, would be there because their employers would send them. The group had a discussion regarding how to best balance the pure entertainment effect of playing a game with the seriousness of a scientifically developed training device, and consequentially how to best ensure an optimal learning effect combining these two. All these needed to be continuously taken into consideration at all times during the development process. Additionally the group decided not to develop a game that necessitated a heavy manual in order for the user to master it—we wanted a game the user could simply sit down and start playing with minimal instruction.

This focus on the user made it necessary for us to consider the marketplace. We considered whether our end-user was in a position were he/she would be interested in, and willing to pay for, a product such as ours. We investigated whether similar products in the area of simulators already existed and found very few that could even be said to resemble what we were developing. At the same time we looked into different training alternatives in the area of negotiation. Here we found that there were many different alternatives, although most of them seemed to be different versions of the same idea. In most cases lecturing about the topic of negotiation was interspersed with group exercises and role-playing activities. We considered our product to be different enough from these that there could be a market for it.

## *The contours of a simulator emerge*

At the end of September the group started planning and making the necessary preparations in order to conduct interviews with professional negotiators. This was done in order to gain access to practical information that would complement the theoretical information the group already had. The interviews were carried out over a period of six weeks. This included identifying potential participants, recruiting them, developing an interview guide, and analysing the results[4].

The group had to consider whether the design of the project would call for an application to the ethical committee REK, in order to get an approval of our research. However, we found this not to be necessary. The primary reasons for this were that the research would not target any vulnerable groups, and would not entail misleading or manipulating the participants. The decision was made in close cooperation with academic advisors. This process lead us to be more aware of this topic area and spend a substantial amount of time developing detailed consent forms as well as briefing and debriefing the participants thoroughly.

In addition to looking at literature on the topic of negotiation the group decided it was important to immerse ourselves in gaming. To this end the group obtained an X-box game console, taking time to familiarise ourselves with the different types of game categories available. We got a hold of the simulator game developed by Aldrich and his colleagues based on their research mentioned earlier. It was our goal that the whole group would familiarize itself with this game. As well as this we had a workshop with an avid Internet gamer in order to gain insight into massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) that are gaining ground globally.

Over a period of a few days the members had presentations for each other of the different individual literature reviews[5] and at the same time did a recap of the knowledge the group had on negotiation theory and research, gaming-, simulation- and learning theory.

January 2007 started off with a period of design and paper prototyping based on the findings of the interviews conducted in November 2006, in accordance with User Centred Design

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[4] For details see the specific section later on in this document

[5] These literature reviews are a compulsory activity in the master's degree, and must be approved in order to successfully complete the degree. It is expected that the students hand in approximately 40 pages detailing the literature that makes up the theoretical background for their theses. These documents are considered separate from the thesis and are therefore not included in this document. The literature reviews were to be handed in at the beginning of December.

(Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1997; Faulkner, 2000; Nielsen, 1994). The group worked on designing low-tech parts of the simulator and simultaneously wrote scenarios in order to be able to test the usability of some main ideas. The result of this work was a cardboard mock-up. Using this mock-up, the group conducted a series of Usability tests that provided useful feedback. At the same time, a second period of data collection was prepared. This was an observational inquiry into how professionals actually negotiate. In the same way as our earlier experimental enquiries this entailed designing the experiment from scratch, with participant recruitment, script development and data analysis[6].

[6] Both of these experiments are detailed in specific sections later on in this document

# Development through User Centred Design

## *Two iterations of development*

A premise for this project was that the simulator should be developed through User Centred Design methods. We based our analysis and design process on *Human-centered design processes for interactive systems* (ISO-13407), which describes four phases in an iterative and incremental development process (fig. 1): Understand and specify the context of use, specify the user and organizational requirements, produce design solutions, and finally evaluate designs against requirements. The four phases are repeated in an iterative process until the result of the evaluation phase is that the design fulfils the requirements.

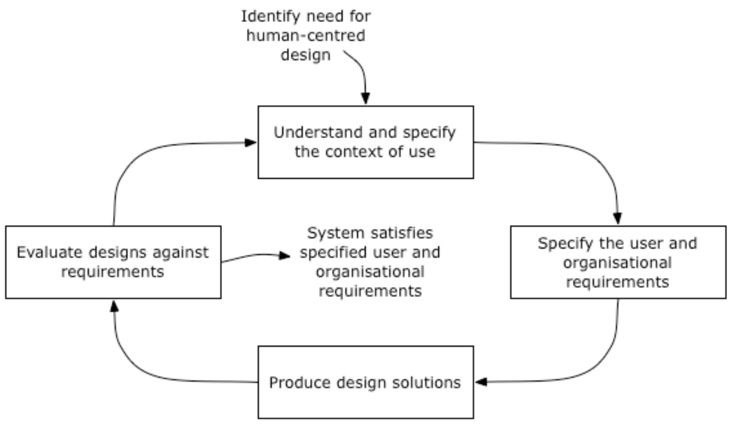


*Fig. 1: The Human-centered design process for interactive systems. Reproduced from ISO-13407*

Within this framework, we based our activities on general methods from Usability Engineering (Faulkner, 2000; Nielsen, 1994) and, to a greater extent, on specific techniques from Contextual Design (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1997). Contextual Design (CD) is an approach to User Centred Design, developed and refined over many years as a response to difficulties faced when working with design teams. Our reason for choosing CD was mainly that it offers specific techniques for analysing user data for the purpose of design, as well as an approach to the entire design process. We wanted to gather data about how people negotiate and base our design on this, so CD was a natural choice. In such an analysis, where the goal is well-grounded ideas for design, and not statistical significance or external validity, CD is better suited than more conventional research methods. Furthermore, CD is developed with teamwork in mind, and the results of its analysis and design methods are both produced and presented in ways that supports collaboration—its artefacts are mostly large and tangible. We also considered other methods, like Cognitive Work Analysis (Vicente, 1999), but we saw CD better suited for an innovative group effort like ours.

We considered that a project of this size could not be completed within one year, but we planned to get through at least two iterations. In this section, each of these two iterations is described[7]. Within each of the iterations the activities of the four main phases are outlined, as well as descriptions of the different techniques we used.

## *First iteration*

*Understand and specify the context of use*

We discussed three possible ways of getting data from negotiations. In CD, data are gathered from the context of use through the technique Contextual Inquiry, where members from the design team observe the relevant tasks being done and ask questions to understand what the involved people do and why. In our case, this would imply that we had to get access to real life negotiations, or we could also set up our own constructed sessions with experienced negotiators as participants. The third possibility was to conduct more conventional interviews where we got negotiators to tell us about their experiences.

At this point, we concluded that it would be better for us to get access to negotiators for interviews than asking to observe them. Also, conventional interviews could give us a broader understanding of the topic, and a chance to compare the views of real life negotiators with the theories we have found through literature search. We could instead consider doing observations in the next iteration.

*Getting participants.* The process of getting participants for the interview started with a brainstorming session with the purpose of mapping potential negotiators. This mapping was done without any form of restriction such as availability, status or such of the participants, and the list contained names of lawyers, brokers, politicians, peace mediators, and representatives from both unions and employer organisations, some of whom were well known figures in Norway. The only requirement for getting on the preliminary list was that they had negotiations as an integrated part of their work. We composed a joint e-mail that we sent out to a group of the people on the list, made up of the professionals that we considered most attractive. The e-mail gave a brief description of the project we wanted them to participate in.

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[7] To clarify, the iterations mentioned here are full iterations around the cycle of *The Human-centered design process for interactive systems* (ISO-13407), not the design–test cycles mentioned in literature on Usability Engineering (Faulkner, 2000; Nielsen, 1994), which are a part of the *Produce design solutions* phase.

Of the 35 professionals we e-mailed, 26 were willing to take part in our study. We got almost only positive feedback, and those who did not participate did not do so more as a result of other obligations than lack of interest.

*Preparing the interviews.* The interview was designed and conducted using several methods, such as Contextual Interview and Cognitive Interviews, along with suggestions from qualitative methods in general. We worked out some overall goals and lay down a plan for the structure of the interview to ensure that we touched upon all the different aspects of the predefined goals. This was a dynamic process were both the overall plan for the interview was embedded, but also more specific questions. The interview guide (see Appendix B) went through several rounds of testing and critical evaluation by the different group members. On the one hand we wanted the questions to be as broad as possible in order for the participant to freely express their thoughts on the topics without being tied to a specific context or without being lead by us. On the other hand the questions had to be specific to the degree that they gave us information that was not solely on a meta-level, but include details on topics we wanted to explore further. This is the reason we selected a method that included a semi-structured interview.

We prepared an interview guide that started with a section constructed with the purpose of "warming" up the participants, and to put them in the right state of mind for reflecting on their overall relationship to negotiations. Here we included questions on their background in terms of negotiation experience, their overall education, and what the participants found interesting and intriguing by negotiations, but we also wanted them to give us their definition of negotiations. Our reasoning behind asking them for their definition was to be able to find potential differences between the definitions provided by theory and the definitions provided by experience, and therefore have a more applied approach to negotiations. Through this we would also be better able to understand the interviewees' background and point of view.

Contextual Inquiry inspired the next section of the interview guide. As we obviously would not be able to observe negotiations in an interview, we included a question instructing the participants to visualize and verbalize a newly experienced negotiation they had participated in, and to be as detailed and specific as possible. In the next step, the participants would "walk us through" the negotiation all over again, equally detailed and specific, but this time with the perspective of another participant. This technique was influenced by the Cognitive Interview

(Memon, 1999), with the intention of getting as close as possible to actual negotiation experiences. Our role as interviewers would be to ask questions on what they did and why, to get to details on how they negotiated, as we would have done in a Contextual Inquiry.

The next section of the interview guide focused on the participants' own reflections on different areas of negotiations such as – *in your opinion, does there exist a core in negotiations?* Along with – *are different strategies used deliberately?* These questions were broad and non-specific in order to encourage them to think freely on these topics without facing the risk of anchoring the participants to any specific mindset.

The next questions in the guide encouraged the participant to continuously reflect on negotiations per se, exploring their thoughts and experience concerning group size/group composition and the use of mediators in a negotiation. The final section concerned whether or not negotiations can be taught, with questions such as - *what makes a good negotiator? Are there in your opinion expert negotiators? Do you consider yourself an expert?* These questions were included in order for us to get the participants to reflect on the questions as to whether or not it is possible, or to what extent it is fruitful to combine theory with practice.

We did one pilot interview in order to ensure the logical structure, and to get some feedback on questions that the participant had a hard time understanding. This input lead to some small adjustments to the original interview guide.

*Conducting the interviews.* The interviews were conducted "on site" at the interviewees' work place, with two interviewers. The latter was done to ensure a natural flow, to minimize the risk for interviewer errors, and to be better suited to ask follow-up questions. These two interviewers alternated between asking the questions so that when there was a change in interviewer there was also a change in the topic or focus in the interview. The interviews lasted for about one hour, and the few times the interview exceeded this length, we asked the participants if it was ok for us to finish the interview. Every interview was, for several reasons, recorded after getting the participants consent. First, we wanted to be able to go back and listen to the tapes in order to for us to clear up any potentially misunderstandings. Second, taping gave us the ability to fully direct our attention toward the participant without being preoccupied with taking notes. Finally, recording ensured us a degree of detail richness we otherwise would not get by simply taking notes.

At the start of the interview the participants were given general instructions where we repeated the reason we wanted to interview them. They were told that we already had a theoretical approach to the study of negotiation, and that we wanted a more applied approach. We then tried to put the interview in a broader context in order to make them understand that we were interested in their input in light of their practical experiences with negotiations. We told them we were not interested in testing their knowledge or comparing their knowledge to any of the other interviewees'. This was done to put the interviewees at ease and lessen any possible evaluation anxiety.

According to proper conduct regarding ethical issues, we then informed the participant that they were free to terminate the interview at any point without any explanation, and that we, if they allowed us, would tape the interview. Finally we asked them to sign a document to this effect.

This way of conducting an interview demanded that the participants were able to verbalize different settings and to walk us through a negotiation setting they had been in recently. Our participants displayed this ability in various degrees—some had little to say, while some talked mostly in general terms about what they *usually did* in negotiations. In addition, this way of conducting an interview required, to a great extent, that the participant was conscious about his or her own negotiation skills, and further that they felt secure enough to reveal their thoughts on the various topics to us. Many of our participants were able to do just that, to be specific, and they were eager to share their experiences with us.

After the interview was completed we debriefed the participants, told those who were interested more thoroughly about the project, and opened up for any questions they might have. Finally, we asked the participant if it was ok for us to contact them again for follow up questions. This gave us the opportunity to maintain the good relationship we had established, and have access to participants at a later occasion. We also followed up the participants through e-mail, thanking for their participation.

*Analysing data.* After conducting all interviews, data was analysed in order to use it in the design process. CD proposes two conjunct techniques for this: Interpretation Sessions and Consolidation Sessions. In the former, each interview is analysed individually and summarised in several models and a list of key statements. Through Consolidation Sessions, all interviews are compared, leading to models expressing commonalities across interviews and an Affinity Diagram where all key statements from all interviews are grouped and structured hierarchically to give a comprehensible picture of the data.

In the spirit of CD—the design team using the method is encouraged to adapt the techniques as needed in its design process. We decided to use two of CD's models to analyse our interviews, namely the Sequence Model—in our case used to describe the steps taken through a negotiation, and the Culture Model—describing the actors involved and their influences and attitudes towards each other.

We started out with an Interpretation Session of the first of 26 interviews with the entire group present, as is recommended in CD. One group member talked us through the interview, two asked questions, one wrote down key statements, and one drew models. This first session with the whole group was an important way of getting everyone familiar with this method of working, but we could see that it would not be an efficient way of analysing all of our interviews. On the other hand, an important effect of using this technique is to let all team members get an insight into and a common interpretation of all interviews. Our solution to this was to do Interpretation Sessions in the dyads that had conducted each interview, and then present the models and the key statements to the entire group.

After writing our individual Literature Reviews, we started up the teamwork again with Consolidation Sessions in the beginning of December. Our first task was to organise all key statements from the Interpretation Sessions on our walls in an Affinity Diagram.

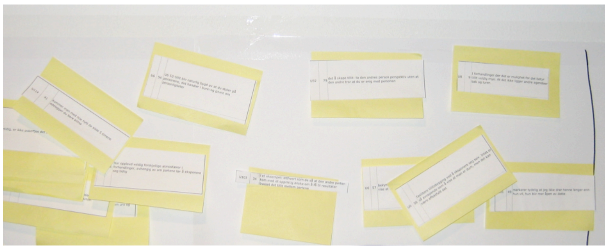

*Fig. 2: Grouping statements*

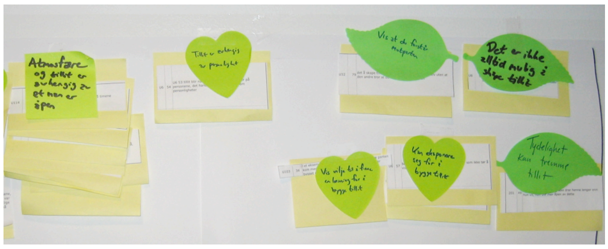

*Fig. 3: Summarising groups in one sentence*


*Fig. 4: Formulating questions for the green post-its to answer*

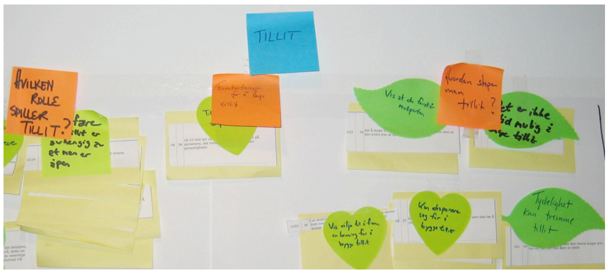


*Fig. 5: Organising groups under themes*

We printed out all the key statements and glued them onto post-its, and then tried to find those that said something similar about negotiation and put them up on the wall together (fig. 2). As groups of statements were formed, we wrote green post-its that summarised each group in one sentence (fig. 3). We then organised these groups again under orange post-its with questions that the green post-its answered (fig. 4). Finally, we organised groups of orange post-its under blue post-its, which named the theme of the groups (fig. 5). As an example, the blue post-it named "Trust" spanned the orange post-its "What part does trust play in negotiations?", "How to create trust?", and "[What are the] preconditions for creating trust?". Under the second one of these were the following green post-its: "Show that you understand your opponent", "Show that you are willing to find a solution", "You can expose yourself to build trust", "Clarity can promote trust", and "It is not always possible to create trust". And under these were the original key statements from the interviews that led us to create this hierarchy.

*Fig. 6: Part of the finished Affinity Diagram.*

Our initial goal was to do this rather quickly—CD recommends doing it in one or two days because this process can be taxing on the group when drawn out over a longer period of time. But with more than 1500 key statements, many of these rather general or fuzzy, and only five people to organise them, the process lasted for eight working days. This was an intense process that gave us a good foundation for the design process as well as an intimate understanding of the interviews (fig. 6).

The next three days were spent on consolidating the Sequence and Culture Models. Similarities in the accounts of negotiations given by the different participants in the interviews resulted in a consolidated Sequence Model (fig. 7). The Culture Models were a bit harder, as the different negotiations involved very different configurations of people and groups, but we managed to condense and combine these into one Cultural Model (fig. 8).

| Aktivitet | Intensjon | Abstrakt steg |
|---|---|---|
| **Opprette og vedlikeholde kontakter og kunnskap** | • For å kunne holde seg oppdatert på hva som skjer | - Opprettholder og pleier personlige relasjoner<br>- Oppsøkende kunderekrutering<br>- Vedlikeholde faglig innsikt |
| **Ser behov/mulighet for forhandling** | | • Trigger: Ser behov/mulighet for forhandling<br>- Skal i forhandling<br>- Ser en mulighet<br>- Vil bli enige<br>- Det kommer et krav<br>- To interesser står opp mot hverandre (konflikt)<br>- Det kommer en forespørsmål<br>- Avtale utløper |
| **Forberedelse** | | • Finner ut hvem internt som skal være med |
| | • Vite hva man snakker om<br>• Være forberedt for å ikke la seg lede vekk fra de viktige punktene<br>• Faglige forberedelser for å se om man kan løse noe før forhandlingene—hva kan man bli enige om og ikke enige om | • Kartlegging<br>- Kartlegge fakta<br>- Sjekke historien<br>- Undersøke markedet |
| | | • Sondere relasjonskontakter |
| | • Finne løsninger hvor begge parter er litt fornøyd og litt misfornøyd | • Analyse<br>- Analysere seg selv og motpart<br>- Finne konflikten |
| | • Finne dekning for ønskene sine ett eller annet sted i det større systemet | • Sørge for at alle positive/relevante kommer |

*Fig. 7: Part of the consolidated Sequence Model*

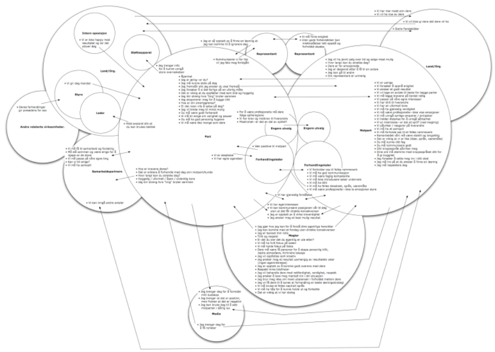

*Fig. 8: The consolidated Cultural Model*

*Specify the user and organisational requirements*

At this point we had the Affinity Diagram on our walls, as a picture of what our interviews had revealed about negotiation, the Sequence Model describing the general phases and steps in negotiations, and the Cultural Model showing the influences and attitudes that may exist between people and groups involved in negotiations. Together these formed a description of the main aspects of the field we were going to develop a simulation of, and were therefore a set of requirements for our simulator. We also had the user profile created earlier.

In addition, each team member made a list of requirements for his or her area of focus, and this resulted in a tentative list of requirements to be explicated in the further process.

*Produce design solutions*

*Design.* This phase of the process involved creatively producing design solutions as a response to the data we had gathered. We continued to use the methods proposed in Contextual Design, in which the next step is to create a common vision for how our simulator and training course could be. In CD, a "vision" is a drawing of the product to be designed and the way it would be used. The focus is not on details, and the overall picture is drawn in simple sketches. It is important in CD not to design a product only, but to design a new way of working, and that should be reflected in the vision. In our case, we were not just designing a simulator, but a new way of learning to negotiate, and our vision should include the design of the simulator and the entire training course.

We started by "walking the wall" (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1997, p. 275), i.e. going through the hierarchy of the Affinity Diagram to remind ourselves of what we had found. As we got ideas or questions from the data, we wrote them on post-its and put them next to the data that had triggered them. We did the same with the Sequence and Culture Models.

Then we went through the ideas and wrote a list of the most central ones. With these ideas as starting points we drew different visions of the simulator and training course. We brainstormed and drew sketches on a board. Some visions incorporated several ideas, while others were based on only one. When all ideas had been drawn out, we went through them again, writing positive and negative aspects for each of our 27 different visions.

Our next task was to incorporate these into a common vision. In fact, it was decided to make two visions—one for the training course and one for the interaction with the simulator. As suggested by CD, we tried to combine conflicting visions by using the positive aspects from both instead of picking one vision over the other. For example, in one vision a training course included several different negotiation exercises based on the same scenario, and would then allow us to use this scenario as a theme for the day, where the participants could really get into their roles of for instance being employees of an imaginary firm, wearing t-shirts with the firm's logo etc. On the other hand, we had a vision that made a point out of having different scenarios for each negotiation exercise, to give us more flexibility in tailoring scenarios to the specific learning outcomes of each exercise. Instead of choosing one of these, our common vision consisted of independent negotiation exercises, to give us the flexibility of the second vision, while at the same time allowing us to make a set of exercises that fit together as a theme course as in the first vision.

The next step in Contextual Design is to draw out storyboards based on the vision. A storyboard is in essence a sequence of drawings visualising one possible trajectory through the system being designed. We wanted to get through at least two iterations before the end of the project period, and at this point in the project we knew we were running short on time. Therefore, we decided to do only one storyboard on the simulator to elaborate on our vision and generate more specifics for a Usability test. We also chose to focus on the simulator and not the entire training course to limit our focus in the first test. We spent the next two days on this, with an imagined case of an employee negotiating a contract with his potential new boss.

We drew the interaction between a user and the simulator as it could play out in this scenario like a cartoon, where each frame represented an action from the user or a response from the simulator. At each frame we asked ourselves what actions the users might take, how to make the interaction natural, and how the simulator would respond. We tried to incorporate several of the ideas from our common vision, and ran into issues that we had not thought of in the visioning process and also came up with solutions to a lot of them.

After only one storyboard session we had a sketch of a user interface for the simulator and a much clearer idea of how the interaction could work, and we decided to make this the object of a usability test.

*Usability test.* Since our first prototype was more concerned with the user interface than with the simulated negotiation, we reasoned that it was not important for the participants to have any formal negotiation experience, and we recruited five master students for a usability test. This was considered a large enough sample to discover usability problems and to get an impression of whether the participants understood the general concept. Again our aim was to generate inputs to the design process, not to design an experiment with validity or statistical significance in mind.

We spent the day before the test making a cardboard prototype of the simulator interface as we saw it at this point. The prototype consisted of a main screen showing the opponent on the other side of a table, and a smaller screen with controls and buttons for interacting with the simulator. The screens were going to be touch screens, so the user would interact by pushing the controls directly, as opposed to using for instance a mouse, a keyboard, or a stylus.

The prototype was based on a scenario similar to the one in the storyboard, where the user was to negotiate a contract with a potential employer. We wrote a script for the test (see Appendix C), and in order to limit the number of sentences and interface parts we had to prepare, we chose a set sequence of events through the negotiation. We printed out the sentences of the possible dialog and other interface parts, and glued them onto cards.

As the prototype was made out of paper, one of the team members would have to act as the "computer" and manipulate the prototype in response to the participants' actions—a technique known as “Wizard of Oz" (Faulkner, 2000). The participants would be instructed to treat the mock-up in front of them as an actual computer screen.

Before the test, we conducted a pilot test with one of our team members, who had had limited contact with the mock-up, as the test subject, both to test the script and the mock-up and give the test leader and the one acting as the computer a chance to practice.

We used a very simple test setup. The participants were presented with the prototype in a room with a table and a video camera, and in the adjacent room the team members not conducting the test observed the events on a TV screen while taking notes of the problems discovered and other interesting incidents. The tests were recorded so that we could look at the tests later, if needed.

*Fig. 9: The Usability test*

After an introduction, each participant was shown the screens and asked to tell us what they thought of the screens and what they believed they could do with them. They were then asked to use them as they would have had it been a finished computer-based simulator (fig. 9). Most participants hesitated in the beginning, but after a little while, they pressed the buttons on the control screen and waited with interest while the “computer” laid out the interface parts representing the response of the simulator. In accordance with User Centred Design methods, they were continuously asked to think out loud and explain their actions and reasoning as well as they could. At each point in the dialog they would tell us what they wanted to do, complete that action, or if they sketched out an action that had not been completed in the mock-up, the test leader sitting next to them would direct them to the choices that had been prepared.

The test gave us the impression that our design worked rather well—the participants quickly understood what was going on and how they could manipulate the interface, except for some confusion with minor parts of the interface. Also, it seemed that they got an experience of having a conversation with the virtual opponent in the prototype, but they reported that the conversation was too much to the point—they wanted to involve more small talk with the opponent. This is a potential by-product of us not having had the opportunity to develop all the alternative statements the participants could choose.

*Evaluate designs against requirements*

This first iteration through the design process was ended on February 2., 2007 with an evaluation of our design against the requirements. We first went through the requirements we had written down for our different focus areas. For most of these we were either on track or at a place in the development where the requirement was not relevant, but we saw that we sooner or later would have to specify what the learning outcomes for the simulator and training course should be. We had implicit learning outcomes, but needed to get more specific and concrete in order to have a set of intended outcomes to evaluate against.

We also went through the Affinity Diagram, Sequence Model and Cultural Model, to see if there where central issues we had overlooked this far. We made a list of some topics that we would have to include when continuing the design in the second iteration.

This marked the end of the first iteration, with the conclusions from the above evaluation, the results from the usability test, and the current design of the simulator as outputs to the next iteration.

## *Second iteration*

In the second iteration, we worked with three issues in parallel; preparations for an inquiry to observe negotiation in action, further design based on the inputs from iteration 1, and investigations on the business aspects of our project.

*Understand and specify the context of use*

In the second iteration we wanted to get access to, or arrange, a situation that would allow us to observe how professionals negotiate in practice. Through the interview data in the first iteration we had a substantial amount of information on how they represented their own negotiation skills in an interview, making it interesting for us to observe this behaviour as well. Also, the interviews had given us an overall picture and a framework for the simulator and training course, and now we wanted to fill this with more detailed data to base our simulation on.

Through planning this observation as part of an inquiry that also included a dialogue with the professionals about their behaviour we hoped to gain an even deeper insight into negotiation. Therefore the goal of the experiment became to design a method that would allow us to observe the professionals while they negotiated, and then follow that up with a Contextual Inquiry session.

*Getting participants.* It became clear early on in this process that in order to get as much information from the participants as possible the inquiry would take quite some time to conduct. Because of this the group decided to aim to conduct at least two sessions, each including two participants and lasting for about three hours. This meant finding professional participants that would put themselves at our disposal for three hours, allow us to film them as well as observe them while they negotiated something that we set up, and then let us interview them separately while taking them through the video of their negotiation. In the earlier interviews we had asked the participants if they would consider helping us in the future, and almost all of them had eagerly agreed. Three weeks before the inquiry we sent out questions to those that had agreed asking them whether they would be able to contribute their time, being specific about the time it took and what dates were scheduled. The immediate response was good in that two professionals volunteered to participate, which meant that we had one session covered. Two other professionals replied that they were unavailable but could find someone with experience similar to their own from their own organisation that could take their place. This meant that we had reached the goal of at least two sessions.

Of the four professionals we recruited two were women and two were men. Based on their schedules each session ended up pairing one male participant with one female participant. They were all professionals in the field of negotiation, spending a majority of their workday honing their skills in the area, within law or unions.

*Preparing the inquiry.* Having a place in which to conduct this experiment was important. Even though the office at the University of Oslo could have been used, we approached NetLife Research; a usability company we knew had a lab in which this type of activity could more easily be carried out. They were kind enough to let us use their lab and offices for the entire experiment, which meant that we had the use of a lab in which the participants could negotiate while being videotaped, an adjoining room where the group could observe the negotiation on a TV, and two areas in which the participants could be briefed before each negotiation session (see script in Appendix D). In addition, the lab and offices are centrally located, making them easy for the participants to find.

Keeping in mind that the central focus of the inquiry was to observe negotiation behaviour it was important to the group to identify a subject matter that would bias or skew the results as little as possible. In order to find this subject matter for them to negotiate about we conducted searches in published literature. The goal was to identify potential negotiation scenarios that would allow the participants to feel that they were negotiating something meaningful while at the same time keeping the subject matter within an area that was equally unusual for them—we wanted to attempt to create a level playing field for the participants. Through literature searches conducted earlier in the project, as well as new ones, we were able to find 3–4 different articles that included clear descriptions of the scenarios that had been used as well as information about how they had been introduced and what tools the participants had been given (Gelfand, Higgins, Nishii, Raver, Dominguez, Murakami, Yamaguchi, & Toyama, 2002; L. Thompson, 1990a, , 1990b; L. Thompson & Hastie, 1990). The tools that were most useful to us in order to replicate the use of a scenario was the pay-off schedule; the tables the participants were given to illustrate their most desirable outcomes. In the source literature the scenarios had been used for differing purposes, purposes that left the scenarios secondary to what was being investigated. This gave us reason to believe that the scenarios could be used without impacting the experiment, giving us an experimental setting where we could simply observe the negotiation itself.

From the group of scenarios we had found, we considered two of them to be best suited for the experiment. Due to the fact that all of the scenarios were taken from source literature that was in English and had been used in the U.S. it was important to have situations that could most easily be transferred to Norway. For example some of the scenarios we found had issues that we considered would have been too hard for the participants to relate to, focusing on American commodities brokering, while another introduced the participants to aliens on a different planet (Boven & Thompson, 2003; Mannix & Neale, 1993). Therefore, based on our understanding of the scenarios we attempted to select the scenarios we felt the participants would understand most easily. The scenario we decided to use in the first exercise in order to familiarise the participants with the method and each other was a negotiation of an employment contract between an employer and a potential employee. This scenario gave the participants five categories to negotiate. The second and main negotiation that would form the basis for the contextual interview, was based on the purchase of a car, and included the car-salesman and the potential buyer. In this scenario there were eight categories to negotiate. The reason for choosing two scenarios was that one of them would be a scenario the participants could practice with, something which would make it possible to increase the quality of the data collected in the contextual interview following the second negotiation. Having selected the scenarios we translated the pay-off schedules and wrote the scripts that we were to follow (see Appendix D). After we had finished the scripts and the pay-off schedules we piloted the observation and the contextual interview. The pilot lead to some minor changes to the scripts, but more importantly served as a rehearsal for the group, helping us become more prepared for the sessions with the professional participants.

*Conducting the inquiry.* On the two evenings when the sessions were held, a dedicated group member guided each participant through the evening. In this way we made the participants feel a little more secure, something which was considered important in case they were inexperienced with an experimental setting or with being filmed. The participants were introduced to the group and each other first and then briefed by "their" group member. They were shown the rooms they would be in for the brief/debrief and the negotiations, as well as seeing the observation room from which the group would observe them negotiating. This was done in order to put them at ease with the situation. In addition, the participants were given a standard consent form to sign, detailing their participation as well as their right to terminate the experiment at any time and without giving any explanation. In both negotiations the participants were given time limits in order to motivate them to reach an agreement. After the first negotiation, which the entire group observed from the adjoining room, the participants were debriefed by "their" group member, and again briefed for the next negotiation. When the second negotiation was finished, the participants were taken through the film of that negotiation separately, each with "their" person and one other group member. In this way we were able to carry out the contextual interview successfully, making sure that the participants both felt debriefed and gave us an insight into their motivations and thoughts throughout the negotiation. Before the participants left we gave them a small gift as a thank-you for participating as well as the source articles for the scenarios, so that they would be able to see examples of how other research had been conducted. The day after the experiment the participants were sent a follow-up e-mail repeating our thanks and making sure that they knew they could ask us about the experiment or their participation if they should have questions at a later date.

Both the participants and the group seemed to enjoy the evening, as well as considering it a useful and educational experience. Some of the participants had situations were they were surprised by their own or their opponent's behaviour, and this was an area we had to ensure that they felt debriefed on. However, the main impression was that they enjoyed themselves, forgetting the cameras within minutes of the negotiations starting. It was clear that some of the participants felt more competitive than others, and most of them were also concerned with the self-development they could gain from the experience.

The participants seemed to embrace their characters, easily becoming the car-salesman or potential employee. It also seemed as though each participant may have incorporated aspects of their beliefs about the role they had into their behaviour, and the group had a discussion when the observations were done as to whether that affected their behaviour in the negotiation. If the goal in this observation had been the reliability and validity of the experimental results we could have repeated the experiment and this time run the contextual interview on several of the scenarios, capturing the participants' experiences across situations were they had differing roles.

*Analysing data.* In comparison with the earlier interviews, the data collected through this inquiry was much more concrete, just as we had anticipated, and we got more detailed and clear data about what actually happens in a negotiation situation. Both the data collected through the Contextual Inquiries as well as the wealth of impressions and knowledge the group gained through the observations will be put to use in the further development of the negotiation simulator.

As in the first iteration, we did Interpretation Sessions to analyse the data. First, the team members that had conducted the different Contextual Inquiries went through them, extracting key statements and drawing Sequence and Cultural Models. These were then presented to the entire team, before we went on combining them through Consolidation Sessions. The statements from all four participants were recorded on post-its and added to the existing Affinity Diagram. At a later stage of development this Affinity Diagram will be re-evaluated using these last results, refining the diagram yet again and confirming its existence as a living, changing tool for the product development.

*Produce design solutions*

Parallel with the preparations for the inquiry, some team members continued on the design of the simulator with the inputs from the first iteration. As mentioned, the first iteration had ended with an Affinity Diagram, two models, a vision, a storyboard based on this vision, a prototype, and inputs from a usability test, and in the evaluation we had written down some issues that we wanted to go deeper into in this second iteration. We started a new storyboard to investigate these issues as well as test some new ideas based on the results from the usability test.

In short, we worked with the storyboard just as we had done in the first iteration, but now we wanted to look at a slightly more complicated scenario, one that involved more issues than last time, so the process took a lot more time and we had longer discussions about each issue. We also felt that we generated more questions than we solved, but through this process we pinpointed a lot of challenges with our design that we did not see when we drew the visions. Some of these challenges were simply choices we had to make, while others were problems with our design that needed to be solved for our simulator to work. At this point in the project we recorded these issues in order to discuss them with the rest of the team later.

*Wrap up of the second iteration*

The second iteration was not completed in the time we had available in our project period, and the rest of the process will be continued if and when the project acquires further funding.

The design part of our project ended with a vision and a prototype of a training simulator for learning to negotiate, grounded in theories on negotiations, interviews with negotiators, and observations of negotiation in practice, and tested on potential users. This also includes a vision of a complete training course based on this simulator. Furthermore, the Affinity Diagram, the Sequence Model, and the Cultural Model will be an important foundation for further development of both the simulator and the training course.

# Final thoughts

After having worked with this project over the course of two semesters it is clear to us that our expectations of what the year would include were somewhat correct. However, it would never have been possible for us to fathom the enormity of what we have been able to accomplish, both in our user-centred design process and as a group. This method has allowed us to gather and analyse data from our area of interest in a way that extracts information that is well grounded and rich in detail. This has provided us with an excellent starting point for the creative processes and a solid foundation for development of the product. In addition, the incremental approach has allowed us to immediately incorporate feedback from the user into the design process.

As a group, we have also experienced development. As individuals none of us could have foreseen how much we would mature as a group and perhaps as importantly how much we would learn as individuals. Working as intensively as we have done cannot be compared to anything any of us have done earlier, even in full-time jobs. This has demanded of us a greater insight into our own behaviour and ourselves than anything else could have, and through this we have grown.

We have been able to take the product development far enough to see the contours of a proper product, one an end-user could sincerely benefit from. The feedback we have gotten from the end-users we have been in contact with has been more positive that we could ever have hoped for, confirming our belief in the need for the product, and the product itself. Based on this it is our genuine hope that this work can continue.

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# Appendix A

| Task | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Deciding on an idea | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | |
| Process workshop | | | ■ | | | | | | |
| Planning the methods | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Specify characteristics of the intended users | | | | | | | ■ | | |
| Project literature search | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Presentations of literature | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| Contact possible participants | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | |
| Conduct Interviews—negotiation | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ |
| Investigate other training / simulation / games | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ |

| Task | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Specify characteristics of the intended users | | | | | | | | | |
| Project literature review | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| Contact possible participants | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct Interviews—negotiation | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| Investigate other training / simulation / games | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | ■ |
| Interpretation session | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| Individual literature reviews | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Presentations of literature | | | | | | | | | ■ |

| Task | 50 | 51 | 52 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consolidation Session | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | | | | |
| Requirements specification | | | | | ■ | | | | |
| Visioning and storyboarding | | | | | ■ | ■ | | | |

| **Task** | **50** | **51** | **52** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Design and prototyping | | | | | | | | | |
| User testing | | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluation | | | | | | | | | |

| **Task** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **13** | **14** | **15** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preparations for negotiation experiment | | | | | | | | | |
| Contextual Inquiry—observing negotiation | | | | | | | | | |
| Interpretation Sessions | | | | | | | | | |
| Consolidation Sessions | | | | | | | | | |
| Writing of group thesis | | | | | | | | | |
| Writing of individual thesis | | | | | | | | | |

| **Task** | **16** | **17** | **18** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Writing of individual thesis | | | |

# Appendix B

*Intervjuguide til bruk ved samtaler med Forhandlingsfolk*

**Intro:**

Takk for at du har tatt deg tid til en prat med oss. Som studenter har vi kunnskap om forhandling gjennom det fagbøker kan formidle. Samtidig oppleves det intuitivt at forhandlig er en kunst som beherskes på sitt beste ved/gjennom å samle seg erfaring. Vi er i gang med et hovedoppgaveprosjekt der vi skal skive om forhandling, og vi ønsker med dette å få førstehånds (ekspertise)kunnskap og erfaring med hva nettopp du opplever å være essensen i forhandling. (det kan tenkes at noen av spørsmålene virker som om de gjentas, men dette er for å sikre at vi dekker alt vi kan).

Dataene vi samler inn i dette intervjuet vil bli anonymisert, de vil bli oppbevart etter gjeldende forskrifter sikkert, og de vil ikke brukes senere til andre formål i andre sammenhenger.

Er du komfortable med at vi bruker båndopptager under intervjuet? Dette er for at vi bedre skal være i stand til å dokumentere gangen i samtalen og alt som blir sagt. Opptakene vil bli destruert før slutten av prosjektet vårt (dvs. mai 2007). Dersom du ikke er komfortabel med båndopptaker er dette naturligvis helt i orden.

Du står i tillegg fritt til på et hvilket som helst tidspunkt, å trekke deg fra intervjuet uten å måtte oppgi noen grunn, og be om at båndopptageren stoppes og at dataene destrueres.

Før vi begynner kunne du tenke deg å signere på et informert samtykke der du bekrefter at du har blitt informert om hva som skal foregå, hvordan dataene vil bli behandlet, og at du er blitt fortalt at du på et hvilket som helst tidspunkt kan velge å trekke deg fra intervjuet, eller be om at båndopptageren stanses og dataene destrueres?

1) I hvor mange år har forhandling vært en del av ditt arbeid?

2) Og primært innenfor hvilket felt?

3) Hva er, i følge deg, forhandling, kunne du definert det?

4) Hva liker du ved forhandling?

5) Tenk på en konkret forhandlingssituasjon du selv har vært i nylig:
    a. Beskriv hvordan du forberedte deg, hva du tenkte på i forkant av forhandlingen
    b. rapporter alt, fortell hele situasjonen, ta med så mange detaljer som mulig
    c. beskriv situasjonen fra et annet synspunkt enn ditt eget

6) Vil du si at det er mulig å snakke om en kjerne i forhandling? Finnes det ulike komponenter/en struktur/matrise?
    a. Hvis ja; hva tror du denne består av? Hvis du kunne beskrive kjernen i en hvilken som helst forhandlings-situasjon med kjerne begreper, hvilke ord/begreper ville disse være?
    b. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke?

7) I hvor stor grad tar parter i en forhandling bevisst i bruk ulike strategier?
    a. Hvilke strategier har du erfart?
    b. Gjør det da forhandlingssituasjonen forutsigbar?
    c. Kan du beskrive et eksempel på dette?

8) Har du en fast forhandlingsstrategi?
    a. En plan eller et format eller noen rammer som du alltid bruker?
    b. Baserer du deg på noen former for teorier/metoder/strategier?

9) Innledningsvis sa vi at studenter kjenner forhandling gjennom teori og bøker de har lest, og i innledning til veldig mange av disse bøkene kommer man med utsagnet: ”Alle forhandler vi med hverandre hele tiden”? Er du enig i denne påstanden?
    a. Hvorfor?
    b. Hva er det da som skiller de ulike situasjonene fra hverandre?
       (Egeninteresser/fellesinteresser/økonomiske interesser/andre hensyn? Usikkerhet/kontroll/makt/historie (har man forhandlet sammen før/mot hverandre før, hvor godt kjenner man hverandre osv).)

10) Hva er dine erfaringer med gruppesammensetning i forhold til:
    a. Gruppestørrelse
    b. Antall (forhandlings)parter
    c. Bruk av megler

11) Hva gjør (noen til) en god forhandler? (egenskaper/trekk/personlighet)

12) Anser du deg selv for å være en god forhandler? Ville du anse deg selv som en ekspert?
    a. Hvis ja; hvorfor, og hva vil du si at disse egenskapene består i?
    b. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke, og hvordan vil du i så fall definere ekspertisekunnskap om forhandlig? Kjenner du noen andre du heller ville karakterisere på denne måten?

13) Kan man lære noen til å bli en god forhandler?

Da er vi ferdige for i dag. Hvordan synes du at det gikk? (Gi personen anledning til å snakke om opplevelsen, en aldri så liten debrief).

Kunne du tenke deg å stille til nytt intervju dersom det skulle bli aktuelt? Eller bli kontaktet på en annen måte om vi har flere spørsmål?

Og kunne du tenke deg å stille til et eventuelt eksperiment dersom det blir nødvendig? Vi tenker oss da å invitere deg til å være en aktør i en forhandlingssituasjon der vi vil observere i den grad det lar seg gjøre, en virkelighetsnær forhandlingssituasjon med andre forhandlere. Disse seansene vil bli videotapet. Dersom du kunne tenke deg å delta i en slik situasjon, kontakter vi deg med ytterligere informasjon når tidspunktet nærmer seg.

Tusen takk for hjelpen! Ha en fin dag!

# Appendix C

## *Script—brukertest 1. februar*

[Video er av, prototypen ligger ikke framme]

### *Introduksjon*

Hei og velkommen! Takk for at du tar deg tid!

Dette er en del av masteroppgaven vår. Vi holder på å utvikle en simulator for å lære forhandling, og dette er første test av hvordan det kan bli. Vi baserer utviklingen på psykologiske prinsipper og er veldig opptatt av å ha brukere med i hele utviklingen. Akkurat nå er vi midt i utviklingen, så det du kommer til å få se er litt halvferdig og enkelt, men det er meningen fordi du kan komme med innspill som vi kan ta med videre i prosessen. Det betyr for din del at du må bruke en god porsjon fantasi og innlevelsesevne og prøve å se for deg hvordan dette vil være som en ferdig simulator.

Evaluering vil ta ca. en halv time.

Kjell-Morten sin rolle: fungerer som datamaskin, prøv å lat som om han ikke er der ☺

Vi kommer til å starte med noen få spørsmål, og så vil du få se en skisse av simulatoren. Vi vil be deg tenkte litt høyt rundt det du ser, og så vil vi gi deg noen oppgaver underveis. Det er viktig at du sier hva du tenker underveis. Til slutt har vi noen oppsummerende spørsmål.

Vi kommer til å filme dette, slik at vi i gruppen kan gå tilbake og se senere. Vi vil ikke vise dette for noen utenfor gruppen, og noen av dem sitter ved siden av og observerer nå…

Så må du lese og signere denne consent-formen, for å bekrefte at dette er i orden for deg og at du har blitt informert om at du kan trekke deg når som helst.

[Video på]

### *Intervju*

1. Hvilken erfaring har du med data-/tv-spill?
2. Hvis nei, du har aldri spilt noen sånne spill i det hele tatt?
3. Hvis ja, hva spiller du? Og hvor mye spiller du?
4. Hvilket forhold har du til databruk? Bruker du det mye og til hva?
5. Hva forstår du med begrepet ”forhandling”?
6. Har du noen erfaring med forhandling? I så fall hva og hvor mye?

# *Oppgaver*

Nå skal vi straks vise deg simulatoren, og det er da viktig å huske på at det er ikke deg vi tester, kun simulatoren. Det er ingen riktige eller gale svar, fordi vi er ute etter å se hvordan du oppfatter det. Du er i en gruppe potensielle fremtidige brukere for oss, så dine innspill er verdifulle! Det som er viktig nå er at du sier høyt det du tenker til en hver tid og forteller oss hvorfor du gjør det du gjør. Vær heller ikke redd for å si ting du synes virker rart eller om det er noe du ikke forstår. Tvert imot—det er slike tilbakemeldinger vi ønsker. Og også om det er noe du liker. Vær så direkte som du kan. Vi blir ikke lei oss ☺
Har du noen spørsmål før vi begynner?
Er du høyre- eller venstrehendt?

*Førsteinntrykk*

1. Hvis du ser for deg at dette er bildet på to dataskjermer, hva er ditt første inntrykk?
2. Disse skjermene skal være touch-screen (forklar hvis nødvendig), og tanken er at det som er uthevet på skissen kan trykkes på. Hva tror du du kan gjøre her? Hva tror du vil skje om du trykker på de forskjellige?
3. Vil du umiddelbart kunne tenke deg forskjellen på bruken av disse to skjermene?

*Scenario*

Se for deg følgende: Før du kom til bildet i simulatoren, ble du satt inn i ett scenario og fikk mulighet til å forberede deg. Kort fortalt spiller du en konsultent som skal forhandle sin nye stilling i Nova Consulting. Du har ambisjoner og tenker at du har et godt utgangspunkt for å forhandle dine personlige betingelser. Du har mulighet til å forhandle om lønn, arbeidstid, fri mobil, leasingavtale på bil og ekstra ferie. I tillegg kan du tilby firmaet deler av din kunderegister, og du har allerede en mulig avtale med et konkurrerende selskap.
Vi har ikke laget alle valgene, så noen ganger kommer vi til å be deg velge noe annet, det vi har forberedt.
Da setter vi i gang:
[Klistre opp første snakkeboble: "Hva slags avtale ser du for deg?"]
Kan du si noe om hva som skjedde nå?
Se for deg at du nå skal begynne å forhandle. Hva ville du begynt med?
Kan du fortelle at du ønsker deg 450.000 i lønn gjennom simulatoren? ("Jeg ønsker meg 450.000,-")

Hva tror du skjedde nå?

[Legg på "Det synes jeg høres mye ut. Det forutsetter 45 timers uke."]

Kan du si at du kan jobbe 42 timers uke? ("Jeg kan jobbe 42 timers uke.")

Hva er det det nå forhandles om/hva er det som er på bordet? (450 000 og 42 timer)

[Legg på "Da må du bringe noe mer til forhandlingen."]

Kan du si at du kan gå ned til 425.000 i lønn, men at du da vil ha en ekstra ferieuke? ("Jeg kan gå med på 425.000,-, men jeg ønsker meg én ekstra ferieuke.")

(Ghoste knappen med lønn)

Hva skjedde nå?

(Du ønsker å binde setningene sammen…?)

("Jeg kan gå med på 425.000,-, men jeg ønsker meg én ekstra ferieuke.")

[Legg på: "Det er en avtale det høres ut som jeg kan leve med. Er vi da enige?"]

Kan du si at du godtar avtalen?

(Legg på: "Jeg godtar denne avtalen")

[Legg på: "Velkommen til oss"]

*Debrief*

Hva synes du?

Hva er inntrykkene dine av skissen?

Det som kommer til å skje nå er at vi skal teste noen flere som deg, så vil vi videreutvikle skisse og prøve å inkorporere dine innspill så godt vi kan…

Tusen takk for hjelpen!!

# Appendix D

*Eksperiment forhandlingssimulering uke 8, 2007*

*Jobbsøker/selger*

Velkommen og takk for at du tar deg tid til å delta på dette, det betyr mye for oss!! Det som nå skal skje er at jeg skal gi deg informasjon om det vi skal gjøre i dag, ca de neste 3 timene. Du skal altså forhandle med *NAVN* som du nettopp møtte, i et forhandlingsromm der det er satt opp to kameraer som gjør at vi kan observere dere. Dere vil bli presentert to forskjellige forhandlingsscenarier, det første vil være litt kortere enn det andre. Temaene vil også være forskjellige, men strukturen vil kanskje likne hverandre. Scenariene vil bli presentert hver for seg av meg, først det ene, så etter at dere har forhandlet det ferdig, det andre og du vil få muligheten til å stille meg spørsmål om innholdet før du begynner forhandlingen. Gruppen og jeg kommer til å sitte i et annet rom og se på, og samtidig tar vi det opp slik at vi i etterkant kan se på det sammen med deg og snakke om hva som skjedde.

Høres dette greit ut, har du noen spørsmål med en gang?

Her er en samtykkeerklæring på dette…

*Scenario 1:*

Hensikten med dette eksperimentet er å se på forhandlingsatferd. Du kommer til å forhandle med en annen i en oppgave der det er fem punkter som må avklares. I dette scenariet er du en jobbsøker hos Firmax og skal i ansettelsesmøte hos din potensielle sjef, *NAVN*. Tenk på at det er denne rollen du har når du går inn i forhandlingen. Som den gode jobbsøker du er har du gjort deg noen tanker om dine prioriteringer og de vil du straks se i en payoff oversikt (interesse oversikt).

Payoff oversikten (interesse oversikt) viser alle de forskjellige måter avtalen kan nås på, i tillegg til å gi en oversikt over hvor mange poeng du får for å oppnå hvert alternative resultat. Målet ditt er å få så mange poeng som mulig, men om dere ikke når en avtale i løpet av 25 minutter avslutter vi scenariet og dere vil begge få 0 poeng. Payoff oversikten er oversatt fra engelsk og det kan tenkes at noen av beløpene/begrepene virker sære på grunn av dette, men prøv å bruk dem allikevel ☺

*NAVN* får den samme instruksjonen som du får nå, men vil ha noen andre interesser enn deg, noe som vil reflekteres i hans/hennes payoff oversikt. Derfor er det viktig at du ikke viser din til han/henne også.

Spørsmål?

*(gi ark)*

Ta en titt på oversikten *(gi 2 min til det)*

*Quiz for å sjekke om de skjønner payoff oversikt:*

1. Kan du kort forklare kategoriene du ser?
2. Hva er det du får mest poeng for?
3. Hva er det du får minst poeng for?
4. Hva er ditt ideelle resultat?
5. Hvis du skulle forberedt deg og hadde dine vanlige ressurser tilgjengelig for deg, hva hadde du gjort nå? *(noter)*

Fint! Da skal du få møte din potensielle arbeidsgiver ☺ *(pass på at de har med seg oversikten) Alle 4 møtes foran forhandlingsrommet, de to ledes inn og Ina viser dem hvor kameraene står, Benedicte peker på vann/kjeks/evt. annen info.*

Da kommer vi tilbake når tiden er ute. Lykke til!

*25min senere…*

*FPene tas tilbake til hvert sitt rom og roses.* Vi skal snakke mer om dette etter at neste scenario er ferdig, men hvordan synes du dette gikk? *(KORT, noter)*

*Gi tom oversikt*

Her ser du en tom payoff oversikt som likner på den som ble gitt deg på begynnelse av denne øvelsen. Nå vil vi gjerne at du skriver inn tallene i denne oversikten for å fortelle oss hvordan du tror *NAVN* sin oversikt så ut. Du kan bruke din egen oversikt når du skriver inn i den under. Det eneste hintet vi kan gi deg er at det laveste tallet på oversikten deres er 0 og det høyeste er 400.

Fint, da går vi videre til neste scenario.

*Scenario 2:*

Hensikten med dette eksperimentet er å se på forhandlingsatferd. Du kommer til å forhandle med en annen i en oppgave der det er åtte punkter som må avklares. I dette scenariet er du en bilselger hos BESTPRISBILER og vil gjerne selge en bil til, *NAVN*. Tenk på at det er denne rollen du har når du går inn i forhandlingen. Som den gode bilselger du er har du gjort deg noen tanker om dine prioriteringer og de vil du straks se i en payoff oversikt (interesse oversikt).

Payoff oversikten viser alle de forskjellige måter avtalen kan nås på, i tillegg til å gi en oversikt over hvor mange poeng du får for å oppnå hvert alternative resultat. Målet ditt er å få så mange poeng som mulig, men om dere ikke når en avtale i løpet av 35 minutter avslutter vi scenariet og dere vil begge få 0 poeng. Payoff oversikten er oversatt fra engelsk og det kan tenkes at noen av beløpene/begrepene virker sære på grunn av dette, men prøv å bruk dem allikevel ☺

*NAVN* får den samme instruksjonen som du får nå, men vil ha noen andre interesser enn deg, noe som vil reflekteres i hans/hennes payoff oversikt. Derfor er det viktig at du ikke viser din til han/henne også.

Spørsmål?

*(gi ark)*

Ta en titt på oversikten *(gi 2 min til det)*

*Quiz for å sjekke om de skjønner payoff oversikt:*

1. Kan du kort forklare kategoriene du ser?
2. Hva er det du får mest poeng for?
3. Hva er det du får minst poeng for?
4. Hva er ditt ideelle resultat?
5. Hvis du skulle forberedt deg og hadde dine vanlige ressurser tilgjengelig for deg, hva hadde du gjort nå? *(noter)*

Fint! Da skal du få møte kunden din ☺ *(pass på at de har med seg oversikten)*

*Alle 4 møtes foran forhandlingsrommet*

Da kommer vi tilbake når tiden er ute. Lykke til!

*35min senere…*

*Fpene vises observasjonsrommet og hilser på guttene igjen deretter tas de tilbake til hvert sitt rom og roses.* Vi skal snakke mer om dette straks, men hvordan synes du dette gikk? *(KORT, noter)*

*Gi tom oversikt*

Nedenfor er en tom payoff oversikt som likner på den som ble gitt deg på begynnelse av denne øvelsen. Nå vil vi gjerne at du skriver inn tallene i denne oversikten for å fortelle oss hvordan du tror *NAVN* sin oversikt så ut. Du kan bruke din egen oversikt når du skriver inn i den under. Det eneste hintet jeg kan gi deg er at det laveste tallet på oversikten deres er –6000 og det høyeste er 4000.

Fint! Det var de scenariene vi har forberedt, nå vil du få muligheten til å se gjennom opptaket sammen med Paul/KM og meg og samtidig snakke litt mer om hva du tenkte underveis.

Spørsmål? Vil du ha mer å drikke osv?

*Arbeidsgiver/kjøper*

Velkommen og takk for at du tar deg tid til å delta på dette, det betyr mye for oss!! Det som nå skal skje er at jeg skal gi deg informasjon om det vi skal gjøre i dag, ca de neste 3 timene. Du skal altså forhandle med *NAVN* som du nettopp møtte, i et forhandlingsromm der det er satt opp to kameraer som gjør at vi kan observere dere. Dere vil bli presentert to forskjellige forhandlingsscenarier, det første vil være litt kortere enn det andre. Temaene vil også være forskjellige, men strukturen vil kanskje likne hverandre. Scenariene vil bli presentert hver for seg av meg, først det ene, så etter at dere har forhandlet det ferdig, det andre og du vil få muligheten til å stille meg spørsmål om innholdet før du begynner forhandlingen. Gruppen og jeg kommer til å sitte i et annet rom og se på, og samtidig tar vi det opp slik at vi i etterkant kan se på det sammen med deg og snakke om hva som skjedde.

Høres dette greit ut, har du noen spørsmål med en gang?

Her er en samtykkeerklæring på dette…

*Scenario 1:*

Hensikten med dette eksperimentet er å se på forhandlingsatferd. Du kommer til å forhandle med en annen i en oppgave der det er fem punkter som må avklares. I dette scenariet er du en personalsjef hos Firmax og skal i ansettelsesmøte med en potensiell medarbeider, *NAVN*. Tenk på at det er denne rollen du har når du går inn i forhandlingen. Som den gode personalsjef du er har du gjort deg noen tanker om dine prioriteringer og de vil du få utdelt i en payoff oversikt (interesse oversikt).

Payoff oversikten viser alle de forskjellige måter avtalen kan nås på, i tillegg til å gi en oversikt over hvor mange poeng du får for å oppnå hvert alternative resultat. Målet ditt er å få så mange poeng som mulig, men om dere ikke når en avtale i løpet av 25 minutter avslutter vi scenariet og dere vil begge få 0 poeng. Payoff oversikten er oversatt fra engelsk og det kan tenkes at noen av beløpene/begrepene virker sære på grunn av dette, men prøv å bruk dem allikevel ☺

*NAVN* får den samme instruksjonen som du får nå, men vil ha noen andre interesser enn deg, noe som vil reflekteres i hans/hennes payoff oversikt. Derfor er det viktig at du ikke viser din til han/henne også.

Spørsmål?

*(gi ark)*

Ta en titt på oversikten *(gi 2 min til det)*

*Quiz for å sjekke om de skjønner payoff oversikt:*

6. Kan du kort forklare kategoriene du ser?
7. Hva er det du får mest poeng for?
8. Hva er det du får minst poeng for?
9. Hva er ditt ideelle resultat?
10. Hvis du skulle forberedt deg og hadde dine vanlige ressurser tilgjengelig for deg, hva hadde du gjort nå? *(noter)*

Fint! Da skal du få møte din potensielle medarbeider ☺ *(pass på at de har med seg oversikten) Alle 4 møtes foran forhandlingsrommet, de to ledes inn og Ina viser dem hvor kameraene står, Benedicte peker på vann/kjeks/evt. annen info.*

Da kommer vi tilbake når tiden er ute. Lykke til!

*25min senere…*

*FPene tas tilbake til hvert sitt rom og roses.* Vi skal snakke mer om dette etter at neste scenario er ferdig, men hvordan synes du dette gikk? *(KORT, noter)*

*Gi tom oversikt*

Her ser du en tom payoff oversikt som likner på den som ble gitt deg på begynnelse av denne øvelsen. Nå vil vi gjerne at du skriver inn tallene i denne oversikten for å fortelle oss hvordan du tror *NAVN* sin oversikt så ut. Du kan bruke din egen oversikt når du skriver inn i den under. Det eneste hintet vi kan gi deg er at det laveste tallet på oversikten deres er 0 og det høyeste er 400.

Fint, da går vi videre til neste scenario.

*Scenario 2:*

Hensikten med dette eksperimentet er å se på forhandlingsatferd. Du kommer til å forhandle med en annen i en oppgave der det er åtte punkter som må avklares. I dette scenariet er du interessert i å kjøpe en ny bil og snakker med en *NAVN* hos BESTPRISBILER. Tenk på at det er denne rollen du har når du går inn i forhandlingen. Som den gode kjøper du er har du gjort deg noen tanker om dine prioriteringer og de vil du se i en payoff oversikt (interesse oversikt) straks.

Payoff oversikten viser alle de forskjellige måter avtalen kan nås på, i tillegg til å gi en oversikt over hvor mange poeng du får for å oppnå hvert alternative resultat. Målet ditt er å få så mange poeng som mulig, men om dere ikke når en avtale i løpet av 35 minutter avslutter vi scenariet og dere vil begge få 0 poeng. Payoff oversikten er oversatt fra engelsk og det kan tenkes at noen av beløpene/begrepene virker sære på grunn av dette, men prøv å bruk dem allikevel ☺

*NAVN* får den samme instruksjonen som du får nå, men vil ha noen andre interesser enn deg, noe som vil reflekteres i hans/hennes payoff oversikt. Derfor er det viktig at du ikke viser din til han/henne også.

Spørsmål?

*(gi ark)*

Ta en titt på oversikten *(gi 2 min til det)*

*Quiz for å sjekke om de skjønner payoff oversikt:*

6. Kan du kort forklare kategoriene du ser?
7. Hva er det du får mest poeng for?
8. Hva er det du får minst poeng for?

9. Hva er ditt ideelle resultat?
10. Hvis du skulle forberedt deg og hadde dine vanlige ressurser tilgjengelig for deg, hva hadde du gjort nå? *(noter)*

Fint! Da skal du få møte bilselgeren ☺ *(pass på at de har med seg oversikten)*

*Alle 4 møtes foran forhandlingsrommet*

Da kommer vi tilbake når tiden er ute. Lykke til!

*35min senere…*

*Fpene vises observasjonsrommet og hilser på guttene igjen deretter tas de tilbake til hvert sitt rom og roses.* Vi skal snakke mer om dette etter at neste scenario er ferdig, men hvordan synes du dette gikk? *(KORT, noter)*

*Gi tom oversikt*

Nedenfor er en tom payoff oversikt som likner på den som ble gitt deg på begynnelse av denne øvelsen. Nå vil vi gjerne at du skriver inn tallene i denne oversikten for å fortelle oss hvordan du tror *NAVN* sin oversikt så ut. Du kan bruke din egen oversikt når du skriver inn i den under. Det eneste hintet jeg kan gi deg er at det laveste tallet på oversikten deres er –6000 og det høyeste er 4000.

Fint! Det var de scenariene vi har forberedt, nå vil du få muligheten til å se gjennom opptaket sammen med Paul/KM og meg og samtidig snakke litt mer om hva du tenkte underveis.

Spørsmål? Vil du ha mer å drikke osv?

# Negotiation
## - An interpretive phenomenological analysis

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## Abstract

The research presented in this paper has been motivated by a wish to gain a better understanding of the extensive concept of negotiation. By the means of an interpretative phenomenological analysis six professional Norwegian negotiators have been interviewed in order to capture their experiences with how they encounter negotiation on a daily basis. The interviews are condensed into meaning units and then further reduced ending in a final descriptive statement common to all the negotiators. This statement is discussed in relation to main theoretical currents within the field of negotiation. This study has two main findings. First, how negotiation can be looked upon as a process where two or more parties move towards finding and owning a common solution by the means of communication. In other words that negotiation is characterised by three themes; negotiation is a process, the solution must be common, and the importance of communication. The second finding is how these three themes are themselves distinguished by specific situational, inter-personal, and personal characteristics.

If you ask people to define "negotiation" they will typically answer that negotiation is when people or groups of people try to reach an agreement without letting the disagreement escalate to a full blown conflict. Some professional negotiators will perhaps add that the optimal result of a negotiation is when all parties feel both satisfied and dissatisfied at the same time. That means they all feel they have won something as well as they have had to give something up. Negotiation is thus a balancing act. Negotiation is considered a concept with a wide content and with the more global changes in the field of psychology and the broader society in general this content is ever expanding (Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, & Valley, 2000).

It can be argued that there is no single approach to negotiation; its reality is comprehended only by approaches from many directions (Kremenyuk, 2002). In the beginning psychologists and especially social psychologists studied the concepts of conflict for several decades. This interest can even be traced back to the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1930s and 1940s when he examined the factors affecting group decision making under conditions of conflict. The transition from the psychological study of conflict to a focus on the topic of negotiation, however, has occurred gradually over the past two decades (Rubin, 2002).

Some literature reviews presenting the extensiveness of the prevailing theories on negotiation see the development of these theories in parallel with the more general development within the broader field of psychology (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Bazerman et al, 2000). One prominent tradition, the behavioural tradition, had unlike any other managed to facilitate a dialog between prescriptive and descriptive research (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Bazerman et al, 2000). The prescriptive research traditions focus on the construction of mathematical models of the fully rational negotiator by economics and game theorists (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1953). Descriptive research traditions, however, have emphasised a more realistic view of the task of negotiators and the options to them. The result of merging these two traditions was the introduction of a behavioural decision making perspective concentrating on the negotiator as decision maker; how negotiators actually make decisions, and how they deviate or are affected by biases in systematic ways from optimality or rationality (Bazerman & Neale, 1992; Bazerman, 1994). This can be seen as a turning point in negotiation research (cf. Raiffa, 1982; 2002).

This behavioural decision perspective has, however, been criticised for being somewhat restrictive ignoring factors that were obviously important in negotiation, calling for a more social focus (Thompson, Neale & Sinaceur, 2004). Recent scholarly activity still includes a backdrop of rationality but has a more social focus on how goals, motivation, emotions, and social relationships encourage or restrain the interactions in negotiations and how this influences the negotiation process (Bazerman et al, 2000; Thompson, 2006). These are some of the components of the new social psychology of negotiation that represent yet another approach in the quest to grasp the versatility of this concept.

The intention of the present study is to try to close in on an understanding of negotiation as a concept and in this way make a contribution to this field of research. In order to approach the question of what negotiation involves, one fruitful strategy could be to simply ask people who negotiate on a daily basis how they understand negotiation. People who negotiate through their profession can be expected to be more conscious about their own negotiation skills and therefore more reliable as informants than the average person. Negotiating on a daily basis leads them to an awareness of negotiation as a process, an awareness that a lay person does not have. Thus, professional negotiators encouraged to freely elaborate on their personal experiences with negotiation as they encounter it on a daily basis might give researchers access to unique knowledge, in the sense that it reveals the subjective perspective of each negotiator. This is the guiding hypothesis of the research presented in this article.

The different narratives of these negotiators are here submitted to further analysis in search of a deeper understanding of the substance of negotiation in order to define its essence if there be any. By the means of a phenomenological analysis the present paper aims to capture what is unique in an individual's thoughts and perceptions. A phenomenologically based meaning condensation process is here viewed to be the most appropriate method in order to analyse the collected narratives of experienced negotiators. A descriptive non-redundant statement representing the condensed meaning of these narratives (Kvale, 1996, p. 196) is finally compared with the main theoretical currents within negotiation research. These theoretical currents are some of the recent perspectives within the new social psychology of negotiation presented above, and in addition when it is of relevance to the discussion other perspectives will be included. The discussion here is kept on a general level. This is the most appropriate level of comparison since data originated from such a small sample is not sufficient for an in-depth discussion and assessment of the extensive body of long-existing theory on negotiation.

## Method

Six professional negotiators were interviewed regarding different topics of negotiation. The interviews were designed as semi-structured. That is to say that they were not as open as a conversation but not as structured as a questionnaire. The informants' attention was guided towards the main topics of interest and restrictions regarding the duration of the interview were set by defining a time limit. In order to capture the informants' understanding of negotiation the present study uses meaning condensation following the five step process used by Giorgio (1975). The aim of this method is to close inn on the essence of negotiation by searching for an essential meaning within descriptions of their life world.

*The Interviews*

The six participants in the study make up a sub-sample of a larger group of negotiators all interviewed in relation to the research project conducted by Biørnstad, Furnes, Lundeby, Rambøl and Thorsen (this thesis)[1]. The interviews were carried out during a period of six weeks in the autumn of 2006. The negotiators included were chosen in order to achieve a balanced sample: together they represent a broad spectre of educational backgrounds, training experiences, focus of expertise, and gender balance.

An interview guide provides structure and focus to the interview setting and keeps the interview within its time limits. The guide used in relation to this study[2] was constructed in such a way that all participants were asked the same questions in the same sequence in order for the results of the interviews to be more easily comparable in a final analysis[3]. The questions enabled the participant to freely elaborate on each topic without losing the general focus. Additionally the interviewer was given the opportunity to follow up on answers when these were short or insufficiently nuanced. Recording the interviews further enabled the interviewer to fully engage in the situation. In order for such oral recordings to be analysed they needed to be transformed into written text. Consequently, it is important to be aware of the theoretical and methodological implications with respect to making transcriptions (see for instance Kvale, 1996; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Bird, 2005).

*About Transcription*

The transcriptions in the present study were conducted conscious of the following issues. When presenting oral language into written text it is important for the researcher to be aware

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[1]For more details regarding the procedure of recruiting the informants see the previous document: *Simulating skills—exploring skill development through the design of a game-based training simulator.*

[2] See Appendix A for the interview guide.

[3] For a more detailed explanation of the rationale behind the structuring of the guide see the previous document: *Simulating skills—exploring skill development through the design of a game-based training simulator*.

of the interpretative activity s/he engages in. Transcription is an interpretive act and will always be incomplete and non-objective. The reason for this is that it fails to attend to and implement the extensiveness of details pertaining to the context (Cook, 1990). This implies that a transcription is always already a selection. However, it can be argued that the process of transcribing itself promotes closer attention and an interpretative awareness that advance the understanding of the data gathered (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p.82). Listening and re-listening to the audio tapes used in this research, gave the researcher valuable insight into the data material presented here.

This paper seeks transparency by allowing the reader to examine and interpret the findings him/herself. Concrete exemplification of the method will be illustrated by means of the analyses conducted in this study. Additionally, Appendix B presents the condensation of the meanings in one of the answers from one of the subjects on one of the questions from the interview. Such a presentation is meant to give an illustration of how Giorgio's (1975) method of five stages of meaning condensation has been applied to the transcribed material.

*Process of Data Reduction*

The current analysis is carried out as presented in Kvale (1996). First, the whole interview is read through to get a sense of the whole. Then, the natural "meaning units" as expressed by the informants are determined by the researcher. Third, the theme that dominates a natural meaning unit is stated as simply as possible. The researcher here attempts to read the informants' answers without prejudice and to thematise the statements from their viewpoint as understood by the researcher. The fourth step consists of interrogating the meaning units in terms of the specific purpose of the study. In the fifth step, the essential, non-redundant themes of the entire interview are tide together into a descriptive statement (1996, p. 194).

These five steps applied to the present study result in the following procedure: the themes are indicated by the different questions provided by the interview guide. Each of the informant's answers to the different questions constitutes a theme (exemplified in Appendix B as Step 1). Each answer gives natural meaning units defined and determined by the researcher (cf. Step 2). Then the meaning units are reduced to a shorter statement (cf. Step 3). In step 1-3 the informants are held separate, each being analysed individually. The short, reduced statements of all of the negotiators on each specific question are compared and discussed and then merged by the researcher trying to shed light on what these statements have in common and what they say about negotiation from the point of view of experienced negotiators. These short statements are then merged into a final reduced statement representing what all the answers of the negotiators on that specific question have in common (cf. Step 4). In the fifth and final step one answer comprising the essential, non-redundant themes of the entire interviews are tied together into a descriptive statement (Kvale, 1996, p. 194). This descriptive statement shows negotiation as it is understood and applied by experienced negotiators (cf. Step 5). Finally, this statement is further discussed in relation to main theoretical currents within negotiation research, aiming to close in on the specific purpose of the study, namely to explore what the essence of negotiation is.

# Results

Within qualitative methods the research questions can be looked upon as a door to the research field under study (Flick, 2002), and according to Braun and Clarke (2006) it is necessary to be clear about the relationship between three different types of questions: the overall research question, the questions in the interview guide, and finally the questions guiding the analysis. Preferably there should be a disjuncture between them in order to ensure that an actual analysis has been carried out and not simply that the questions from the interview guide have been used as "themes" identified in the "analysis" (2006, p. 85).

The overall question guiding this research is whether or not the experiences of professional negotiators can reveal a possible essence of negotiation. The purpose of the first two questions in the interview guide[4] was mainly to "warm up" the informants and to get an overview of their background and experience. These are not included in the present study, and therefore the following question: *How would you define "negotiation"*[5] is the first question analysed. Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 in the guide are held separate in this analysis as well. Questions 7 and 8, however, are analysed together as one: *To what degree do the parties consciously employ strategies? Will this make the negotiations more predictable? Do you have strategies you always follow?*, and similarly questions 11, 12 and 13 are grouped: *What makes someone a good negotiator? Is there such a thing as expertise within negotiation? Is it possible to learn to become a good negotiator?* The reason why these questions are collapsed is the way

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[4] See Appendix A for more details.

[5] This and all the following versions of the interview questions are my translation from Norwegian to English.

in which they gave overlapping answers in all of the interviews. The answers the informants gave were interrelated in such a way that the questions gave more meaning clustered together than separated. To illustrate this point an example of how one of the negotiators answered the questions 11, 12 and 13 is showed in the following extract of the transcription:

R (researcher): **What makes someone a good negotiator in your opinion?**
S (subject): Well, I think in my opinion the most important thing is to be well prepared, both regarding your own goals but also those of your opponent. Because, you have to, in that way it gives you the opportunity to play the whole field, you know, if I had only knowledge of a small part of the entire budget, I wouldn't have known which cards I could have played.
R: Right.
S: So it is all about having the knowledge that enables you to play out as many cards as you need.
R: Mmm.
S: And then you need to be able to read the other person to know what's coming next.
R: How do you do that?
S: Well, you have to get to know the other person, to look for their reactions, and…
R: So it's about personal qualities?
S: Yes, personal qualities, being able to find the other person's pattern of reactions during negotiations.
R: **Do you consider yourself a good negotiator?**
S: Well, yes, I have achieved some good results, if that counts…
R: **Would you consider yourself an expert?**
S: No
R: **What makes someone an expert do you think?**
S: Well… let me see…
R: **Is it possible to talk of "expertise" at all within negotiation?**
S: Yes, I think it does, but there can, there's something to do with, there can always be something in the circumstances that results in the influence of other conditions making it impossible to reach a solution. So I wouldn't use the term "expert", no, I would not.
R: **In your opinion is it possible to teach someone to be a good negotiator or to negotiate?**
S: Yes, I think that's possible, it's even possible to develop personal characteristics as well, so, but you shouldn't be too impatient, I use to say that you need a combination of patience and impatience. You need to be patient in the sense that you are not letting your emotions overwhelm you, and you need to have control of this, but at the same time you need a certain degree of impatience in order to have progress, since things aren't solved by themselves.[6]

Arguably, the questions cited in the previous example all intend to give answers to the question of what makes a good negotiator. Analysing the answers given to these questions as

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[6] All the transcriptions can be provided by the researcher if needed.

a whole provides meaning units with more substance compared to if they were to be analysed separately. Based on the meaning units identified – stage two of the condensation process – the theme that dominates the meaning units is then stated as simply as possible – stage three:

*A competent negotiator knows the possible space of actions and spends sufficient time becoming acquainted with the opponents, enabling him to predict their reactions. A competent negotiator achieves results, this, however, does not an expert make, since circumstantial factors may prevent the achievement of a result. Yes, it is possible to learn how to be a good negotiator because even personal traits can be acquired.*

One extra question – *Do you have any concluding remarks?* – is included in the present analysis comprising of some additional information and valuable remarks some of the negotiators had when the interview was formally concluded. Finally the question guiding the analysis which makes up the third and last type of question distinguished by Braun and Clarke (2006) is that of stage four in the analysis concerning interrogation of what the condensed statements of all the negotiators tell about negotiation. The following is a discussion of how the meaning units as they are defined by the researcher, answer this question. The following discussion is structured by the different interview questions as they were chronologically presented in the interview guide.

*The Discussion of the meaning units*

*Question 1: How would you define negotiation?* Since a definition qua definition is short and precise only the components argued to be most characteristic or specific according to the informant are included. Therefore, when asked to give a definition at this early point in the interview the informants would reveal their non-primed spontaneous description of how they understand the concept of negotiation. In this sense a definition is interesting in at least two ways. First, as an indication of whether or not the informant is being consistent during the interview emphasising the characteristics distinguished in the definition and elaborating on these throughout the interview. If the informant should end up contradicting what initially has been stated in the definition, it would not be exposed to thorough interpretation in this study but rather included as utterances defined as meaning units and essentially reduced into the final descriptive statement. It can, however, readily be stated that no such contradictions have been prevalent. On the occasions when the researcher has been unsure of the informants intentions the recorded tapes have been listened to repeatedly and the principle of charity has guided the researcher. Secondly, merging the reduced meaning units based on the definitions given by all of the informants would perhaps suggest a pre-essence of negotiation; some features of what the essence of all the meaning units combined will look like in the end. The reduced statements of the definitions given by the informants are compared and discussed in the following section.

Two of the informants hesitated on giving a definition. One argued it was almost impossible to define such a concept; the other had stopped trying a long time ago since negotiation being purely practical would not gain meaning by giving it a definition. Still, all the informants managed to give what the researcher would define as a definition. Most of the informants focused on negotiation as involving two or more parties. Three of them defined negotiation as a dialog or a communication process, a forum for finding possibilities and solutions. One mentioned the necessity of a trigger in a situation, a specific cause to appear for two people to start negotiating. Another, however, implied that negotiation not only takes place between professionals but also between husband and wife, parents and children and so on. This definition is the one that differs the most compared to the others as it opens up for a broader understanding of what negotiation is; where do we negotiate, with whom, and about what? Additionally, some of the informants focused on the function of negotiation – why should someone have to negotiate. Obviously it is a way of reaching an agreement between two or more parties when conflicting interests exist. If you need to find a solution to a problem you negotiate. Some of the informants stressed the importance of reaching an agreement representing the best interests of all the involved parties in order for the solution to be solid. This implies finding an agreement which has no obvious winner or looser. One of the subjects explains why this is of such great importance:

> "A negotiation is two parties who must decide upon how to do something in a way that should benefit both of them. And the latter is important. Many make the mistake of trying to get to a negotiation result that is only in the best interest for them selves. In my experience that is the most stupid thing you can do because the implementation of the results of such a negotiation is always a bad one. The solution must be one that is in the best interest of both parties so that one party owns the solution just as much as the other does and both parties implement it".

To establish what these shortened statements say about what negotiation is, a condensation of the discussion above into a final reduced statement is in order. The result of such a condensation would be the following common definition by all the informants:

*Negotiation is when two parties or more must find and own a common solution through the means of communication.*

<u>*Question 2: What do you like about negotiation?*</u> Asking the informants what they like about negotiation would arguably give a somewhat different angel to the previous question. A definition can be thought of as strict and formal; however, letting someone tell you what it is that they like about something is perhaps just as much a definition as the one given previously, providing just as interesting and valuable information. The answers evoked by such a question represent perhaps a view reflecting the informant's more emotional relationship with their role of being a professional negotiator. These answers can be seen as complementing some of the more expertise-like answers given later in the interview.

In their answers the informants focus on different aspects of being a negotiator. Two of the informants focus on the different challenges of the entire process; the preparation of scenarios, to see if the scenarios set in, and then finding a solution. One of these two focuses especially on the excitement in reaching a good result; trying to understand the reason why differences in the results can be so great, how the negotiator can influence the results and arriving at a solution in the best interest of himself if he[7] only knows how to do it right. This informant argues that it is possible for the negotiator to manipulate the result if he has enough knowledge. The informant values such a skill as it increases the chances of achieving certain goals, resulting in a somewhat different attitude towards negotiation than what has been stated in the definition above which focuses more on a result in the best interest of all parties. Another informant appreciates the combination of uncertainty and expectations involved in negotiation. A third informant focuses more on the achievement of being able to solve a conflict; be pragmatically oriented in order to find a solution. One of the informants is fascinated by a certain point that arises during the process when the parties are closer to finding a solution than the opposite; the point of no return. The theoretical challenges, the communication and the differences in culture are other factors the informants stress. Especially, being able to meet and know so many different people is a great privilege to one of them.

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[7] To ensure anonymity I have chosen to use "he" as a common-gender noun.

As expected there is as many different answers as there are people, nevertheless what they all might have in common is the fascination for the challenges concerning the understanding of people and process. As one of the informants keeps repeating throughout the interview w*e are only humans*, and suggests perhaps in order for anyone to understand negotiation they need to understand the people involved. Condensing what the informants have reported into a common statement results in the following:

*Negotiation is personally and theoretically challenging and that is what makes negotiation enjoyable. The process of preparation, the excitement, the uncertainty, and the expectations associated with the result, and being able to understand the result and the people involved is what makes negotiation fascinating.*

*Question 3: Can you visualise and verbalise a newly experienced negotiation you have participated in?* The aim of this question was to more specifically close in on experiences from the informant's own life world. This question can be seen as a continuation of the previous one, inviting the informant to carry on with the personal reflections of how they see their role as a negotiator. The intention was to encourage the informant to display a storytelling attitude in order to gain this type of data. However, the qualities of the data obtained by such a question depend on each of the informant's abilities to be specific and detailed in their visualizations and verbalizations. The informants displayed these abilities to various degrees. This resulted in some answers being more extensive and rich on details compared to others.

Two of the informants stress that the reason for someone to negotiate is the presence of a conflict. Others, however, focus on the need to simply find solutions. A conflict is therefore only one among other triggers in order for it to be necessary to negotiate. Several of the informants explain that the negotiation process is influenced by how difficult and extensive the topics are, and that none of the situations are alike; for one of the informants the negotiation process changes as new knowledge of the situations emerge. In other words, negotiations change depending of the demands of the situation. One of the informants describes negotiation as a process developing through different phases but regulated by a framework already established through laws and formal agreements. The concept of phases is not as consciously stated by all the informants but many describe a to-and-fro-dynamic between the parties comprising of exchanging demands and suggestions, and this being the progress until a solution is reached. One informant has experienced that if the negotiation process is made shorter it becomes more efficient and is easier to control. Another stresses the importance of deciding on a time limit in order for the parties to be able to finish the negotiations. The parties are aware of at what point or stage in the negotiation process they find themselves and this knowledge is deliberately used as a tactic – it influences their willingness to reach an agreement or not. However, as the parties are closing in on the deadline the fear of conflict and strike are imminent, and many of the informants explain that an evaluation of how close one actually is to this limit will be of vital importance if a solution is to be agreed upon at this point in time or not. Negotiation is a game and time is used deliberately as a factor. The parties might additionally be under strong pressure to reach an agreement.

All the informants agree on the importance of solid preparations, the preparations can never be done thoroughly enough, and the key to success lies therein. A way of making preparations reported by two of the informants is to explore the opponent in order to find out whether there is a foundation for negotiation or not. It is also very important to always know both your own and your opponent's goals. One informant even states that trying to understand what the opponent is thinking is what negotiation is all about and that this aspect of negotiation is applicable to other settings. Still, there are many remaining factors not possible to guard against. The communication process for instance is difficult and full of misunderstandings, making it impossible for anyone to completely control it.

The relationships between the parties are important for many of the informants. An effort is made to establish good communication, atmosphere, trust, clarity, credibility, and the importance of a "good climate" was often mentioned. Many of the informants are in a continuous relationship with their opponents, regularly meeting them in different negotiation settings. For one of the informants this has resulted in such a good knowledge of his opponents that he is able to predict their reactions in a negotiation. Many of the informants stress the importance of being honest and not deceiving each other. One of the informants, however, is seldom in a longstanding relationship with any of his opponents and therefore disagrees with some of the other informants regarding how an opponent should be treated. For instance he might deliberately bully an opponent in order to reach the intended solution. Whether or not you will see your opponent again may determine what your actions will be like, but still, the majority of the informants uphold the importance of treating each other with respect and to avoid deception.

The most difficult negotiations, however, are the ones you have with your own. Many of the informants find it often very demanding to reach agreements inside their own group or with their own part. One of them especially focuses on how he often feels squeezed into a double negotiator role; trying to find agreement internally with the parties he is representing and externally with the opponent. In this way one could perhaps understand the negotiation process as developing in two parallel stages, separated by the different arenas but still dependent on each other in order to reach a final solution. According to one of the informants it is important for a negotiator to be adaptive, almost like a chameleon, in order to fit in and find solutions in all parties' interest. Summarising the statements discussed above into one statement results in the following:

*Negotiation can be understood as a way of finding solutions by the means of exchanging demands and suggestions. Negotiation can be looked upon as a game where time plays a vital role, and one must know the rules. Most important are the preparations you do, they must be thorough and solid. However, one can never guard against all eventualities. Finally, it is important not to deceive each other and treat each other with respect.*

*Question 4: Is there a common core, a structure or components that can be identified in all negotiations?* This and the next question are more analytic in their focus than the previous questions. Here the informants are asked to approach their experiences looking for particular patterns or searching for any regularity.

Two of the informants understand a core as a certain point in the negotiation process that must be coped with or managed through in order to reach a solution. Four informants state that there is a common structure but they differ in how they explain it; as phases or as a graph or as a specific course a negotiation always moves through. According to one of the informants there is an essential difference between two types of negotiations: the ones with two equal parties with the common goals of reaching an agreement, and the ones where a request of reaching a solution is not necessarily reciprocated. The negotiation setting differs according to whether or not the opponent is familiar and the parties have a history of previous negotiations. According to another informant what is common to all negotiations is the practical "staging", the formalities, the structure, and the activities. The core components are communication, the difficulties of communication, and theories of human behavior. A focus on the human relationships is also present in the statements of two of the other informants, one of them especially stressing the importance of being honest and building trust. It seems as though all the informants agree on the existence of a common core in negotiations, and summarising their different experiences into one common statement could be:

*Yes, there are common cores in negotiations. These can be divided into two main categories. The first includes features of the negotiation process itself: a structure, a curve, a course, a point of no return, or certain activities, but these are, however, dependent on the underlying motives for negotiating – either if you negotiate because you have to or if you negotiate because you want to. The second category is made up of certain acts by the negotiator; the way one communicates, the efforts made in trying to avoid misunderstandings, and the building of trust.*

*Question 5: To what degree do the parties consciously employ strategies?* All the informants agree on the fact that conscious strategies are employed in negotiations. Everyone has their own way of negotiating. Following a certain strategy is according to some of the informants a sign of professionalism in itself, to others it is a criterion for being a good negotiator. Unprofessional negotiators, however, do not follow the rules of conduct and that is problematic. It makes it easier to overrun them, and that is not how good negotiations are conducted. Inexperienced negotiators expose their intentions too easily.

Almost all of the informants explain that how they choose their strategies depends on the people involved in the negotiation, the actual case, and the number of other cases one negotiates simultaneously. One of the informants admits that he was not aware of how he used well documented strategies until another negotiator told him. He is self-taught and has little experience with the current theories within the field. This informant represents perhaps an understanding of negotiation as something intuitive, a skill that can be developed simply through experience without the need for theoretical knowledge.

The informants all have a variety of strategies and techniques they use during a negotiation. Some of these are of a more general character, for instance the focus of always being well rested and taking enough time. One of the informants, however, comments on how being short on time can have a good effect on a process sometimes. Another of the informants stresses the importance of always being honest. A third informant points to the possibilities of benefiting from adapting to your surroundings. Another overall strategy would be to always focus on finding solutions rather than spending time blaming each other, to be well prepared, and know your own limits regarding rest and sleep in order to avoid mistakes being made and the underestimation of important factors. More specific strategies can be how one builds each argument carefully implementing the same words used by the opponent in order to give the impression of making concessions. A second example can be deciding on which concessions should be made when and how - if you have decided to yield do so in a concealed manner. A strategy would be to decide how much aggression one should express, and whether one should provoke a conflict in order to make a statement. Another strategy is to find solutions to some main points in order to give these solutions status as being normative in the solutions of other points. For a strategy to be successful more than one of the negotiators needs to be able to manage it, and as one informant remarks, that is not always the case. As to what is considered to be an optimal solution or result in a negotiation the majority of the informants seem to agree on this being when both parties are partly satisfied. One informant, however, disagrees and argues that an optimal solution is the one that gains his part.

As to the question of whether or not the use of conscious strategies make the negotiation predictable, one informant stresses that because one never knows the strategies or the limits of the opponent, or where the conflict will come, the negotiation will never be predictable. Another argues that even though one can get to know ones opponent well enough to be able to predict their reactions, this nevertheless do not make a negotiation predictable, every negotiation must be taken seriously. A third informant explains the necessity of any negotiation being unpredictable in order for it to be a negotiation at all. Some of the informants disagree. According to one informant extensive theoretical knowledge enables a negotiator to read the situations making the negotiation somewhat predictable. Another argues that some negotiations are predictable but only if parts of the process are known already. What is predictable in negotiations are the different stages or phases a negotiation always proceeds through. When condensing what the informants have reported in the above, what they may have in common is this:

*Yes, a variety of strategies are employed consciously during negotiations. An active use of strategies differentiates the competent negotiators from the incompetent. However, actions or activities that some may define as being specific negotiation strategies can be used by others without the awareness of these being distinctive strategies. Negotiation can therefore be* *understood as something intuitive. Strategies can be of a detailed or more general character; still the conscious employment of these strategies does not make negotiation predictable.*

*Question 6: Do you agree with the statement that we all negotiate with each other all the time?* The informants can be placed along a continuum determined by whether or not they agreed to this statement. According to the informant representing one extremity, negotiation is only between professionals. The family for instance constitutes of purely human relationships and the discussions and solutions are as a consequence of this of an entirely different form more similar to compromises. Negotiation is not always compromising and can always only be accepted if it leads to a greater profit later. Another informant representing the opposite extremity argues that everything you want to achieve through others you have to negotiate. However, the situations differ regarding the distribution of power, the ambitions in relation to the result, and who the others involved in the negotiation are. These factors determine the choice of negotiation tactics. The remaining four informants place themselves in between these two poles. The majority of the informants distinguish to a larger degree between the different situations and arenas than the first informant does. They also distinguish between situations when you try to gain something for yourself, this being understood as negotiation, and situations when you try to gain something for the common good and this is not negotiation. Additionally, they argue that it is possible to negotiate both in professional and in private settings. Summarising the above, what most of the statements seem to have in common is that:

*Negotiation can take place on all arenas but it depends on the situation; that is we may negotiate with anyone but not all the time.*

*Question 7: What is your experience with group size, number of involved parties, and the use of a mediator?* A majority of the informants consider it to be of no use to be too many, arguing that it complicates the negotiations by prolonging the process and making it more difficult to handle. One especially focuses on his experiences with how the involvement of many parties can restrict the possibilities of action. Another informant states that what is an optimal size for a negotiation party is no more than two or three people, all well prepared. Additionally, some focus on the amount of information that can be gathered only by observing the body language of the parties present, and the more people involved in the negotiation the more people must be controlled in order to prevent any sensitive information from leaking. Some of the informants, however, have positive experiences with being many as long as they all are well organised and coordinated. Being coordinated is focused on by all the informants. It is important to decide on who should be in charge of the group and the formal conversations, and how the communication within the group should be carried out. These decisions are made in the preparations. If the preparations are done thoroughly enough there will, according to one of the informants, be less reason for anyone to interrupt during the negotiation process. One informant claims it to be of vital importance for succeeding with many parties involved, that one makes careful inquiries of the opponent's goals in order to ensure that an agreement is at all possible. Such inquires are of a more informal character compared to negotiations. Negotiations are considered to be more serious in that it invokes expectations of actually reaching a solution and if one fails to do so the consequences are more dramatic than those of the informal inquires.

Some of the informants have experience with negotiations in smaller groups representing larger parties. The negotiations within these smaller groups tend to be more intense often resulting in enduring discussions. Time is a central factor; negotiation is to make concessions at the right time. Additionally it is important to spend time in the early phases of the negotiation process in order to get to know your opponent. When explaining this many of the informants stress the importance of creating a good atmosphere. The milieu is small, and the parties are often in a longstanding relationship with each other – it is of no use to try to deceive each other.

According to one of the informants it is not smart to negotiate alone since you do not have time to think. Another informant, however, reports that he often negotiates alone but is unsure of how this has affected the results.

Regarding the use of a mediator, one of the informants reports of the experience of how a mediator can be used as a way of causing a change in the parties' actions and attitudes towards a topic. A second informant has only experiences with using a mediator in relation to terminating employments. The four other informants stress that in every situation where a mediator has been present the reason has been that because of laws and regulations they have had no other choice; in order for two parties to go on strike a mediator must first be involved. One of these informants characterises the use of a mediator as a concession of failure. Two of the others have experienced that it depends on the personal characteristics of the specific mediator whether it has been positive to involve such a third person or not. It is not easy to mediate between different parties, establishing trust in order to gain access to what the real goals and motives of the conflicting parties are. Additionally, if the parties are not communicating directly much scepticism can be associated with the suggestions presented by the mediator; is this really what the opponent claims or is it just a part of the mediator's game trying to persuade us to yield? Three of the informants having extensive experience with the use of a mediator feel that a mediator is too often and too quickly brought in. The parties are the experts in the conflict; therefore they should be able to solve it together without the involvement of such a third party. What is positive about involving a mediator, however, is that a time limit is set. Still the threat of going on strike is always used by some party as means of achieving their personal goals. The following is the reduced statement which captures the informants' experiences with group size, number of involved parties and the use of a mediator:

*It is preferable to negotiate in small and well coordinated groups. If many people are involved it simply complicates the negotiations by prolonging the process and making it more difficult to handle. Regardless of whether or not it is your party or the opponent that are many or if the negotiation involves many parties or few parties, it is always important to be well prepared and organised. One must take time to get to know the opponents and to make careful inquiries in order to ascertain that the foundations exists for a solution. A mediator must be used wisely; it is, however, necessary to separate the situations where a mediator is imperative and the situations in which the parties are allowed to decide for themselves.*

<u>Question 8: What makes someone a good negotiator? Is there such a thing as expertise within negotiation? Is it possible to learn to become a good negotiator?</u> These questions can be argued to shed light on whether or not negotiation can be taught or to what extent it is possible to learn how to negotiate. In fact the informants' reflections on the relationship between theory and practice are of great interest to the present analysis. If they argue that the participation in a negotiation provides such a unique insight into and understanding of what negotiation is which cannot be obtained by theory, then they argue in favour of the guiding hypothesis stated in the introduction to the present study. In aiming to answer the question of what negotiation is one should search for a deeper understanding of its substance by asking people who negotiate on a daily basis how they understand the concept of

negotiation. When encouraged to freely elaborate on their personal experiences they give the researcher access to unique knowledge that can not to be obtained through theory.

All the informants agree that negotiation is something that can be learned but they differ in their view on how, especially regarding the balance between the importance of theory versus experience. According to some of the informants negotiation can only fully be learned through personally experiencing negotiation, one of them seems to argue this is the only way. This informant argues further that some people even have innate qualifications; however, for any one to be a good negotiator they have to develop personally, to become a person who possesses the abilities of finding good solutions. Similarly another informant compares developing as a person with becoming a good negotiator. A third informant argues that negotiation can be learned as long as one thinks it is fun – everything that is fun is easily taught and easily executed. Two of the informants acknowledge the importance of being familiar with negotiation theory in order to be good at negotiating, still they both emphasise the importance of personal experience, and one especially stresses the value of having a role model that shares his/her experience in order to guide inexperienced negotiators in their development into being more competent negotiators. According to the last informant, however, having years of experience does not make anyone particularly good at negotiating. Theoretical knowledge is necessary in order to make someone really good. Theoretical knowledge is the structure that makes the picture whole; without this structure a negotiator is not able to recognise what is actually going on in a negotiation setting. It seems, however, that the majority of the informants in the present study recognise experience as being more important than theoretical knowledge in order to be a good negotiator.

Three of the informants also discuss how unknown or uncontrollable factors within the different situations can restrict the possible actions available to the negotiator and thereby prevent any one negotiator in reaching a solution. Arguably this is why it is not possible to speak of experts within the field of negotiation. Even an experienced negotiator with many years of practise within different areas of expertise will not get through in all situations. Two of the informants, however, argue that one can still speak of experts but only within specific domains. Expertise within these domains is to know the rules of the game, and according to one informant, they are always the same. For two of the informants it is meaningful to distinguish between “good negotiators” and “experts”. According to one it is sufficient to be negotiating fulltime in order to be an expert. The other, however, focuses on one particular trait and through this agrees with one of the other informants mentioned earlier in that people with intrinsic qualities may have an advantage in succeeding with their negotiations; namely talent. This talent manifests itself as the ability to mislead the opponent regarding one's own limits without being misled in return by the opponent. Seemingly, the informants as a group find it meaningful to talk of expertise within negotiation but they vary in how general or nuanced they are in their reflections. Most of them agree but with great reservations regarding the situation. What the informants' reporting may have in common can be stated in the following way:

*Yes, negotiation can be learned. Being familiar with negotiation theory is an advantage but the lived experience obtained by engaging in negotiations is decisive in order to be good. There can, however, be uncontrollable factors within the different situations that may prevent a solution. There are experts in negotiation but these exist mainly within specific domains.*

*Question 9: Do You Have Any Concluding Remarks?* Some of the informants provided more details and new information towards the end of the interview compared to others. One of the informants especially mentioned that a very important quality for any good negotiator is the ability to be realistic in one's goals of what it is possible to achieve. This seems to be in direct opposition to that of another informant who stresses that committing oneself to a high level of ambition will make you a good negotiator. Good negotiators are often dissatisfied with the results because their ambitions are unattainably high and this is exactly what distinguishes good negotiators from the mediocre.

One informant warns of how time becomes a negative factor if the negotiations are carried on despite of the fact that all parties are tired. Another informant supplements by describing an episode where he kept the opponent in the negotiation room until midnight in order to have the opponent's signature on the agreement before the rest of the opponent's team would arrive the morning after. Still this informant is hesitant in the belief of the good in such tactics. They both agree that pushing ones own and others limits when one is tired increases the chances of ending up with a bad result.

One informant explains how negotiating in teams is becoming more and more the usual method compared to that of the sovereign negotiator. A negative consequence of negotiating in teams, however, is the constant evaluation of your own behavior by the fellow negotiators.

Additionally, within the teams, there are often contradicting needs and interests which can result in difficult negotiations within the team while at the same time having to manage the ongoing negotiations with the opponent. A second informant warns against information leaks and the damage such leaks can do both to the relationship between the parties and to the possibility of reaching a solution. Another informant argues that one way of sharing information between the parties in order to find openings in the conflict is to have informal conversations outside of the actual negotiation setting. Such conversations can be looked upon as negative by some, but as long as they are open and announced they can be valuable for both parties. What these last comments say is perhaps that:

*It is difficult to say what quality is most important in deciding what makes a good negotiator; either to be realistic in ones goal attainment or to commit oneself to high ambitions. Pushing ones own and others' limits of perseverance often results in poor solutions. Negotiating in teams is becoming more and more usual. One must manage the interaction within ones own team in parallel with the interaction with ones opponent.*

*Methodological Remarks*

Before these findings are tied together in a descriptive statement and discussed how they relate to negotiation theory, a few methodological remarks may be in order. The phenomenological method of meaning condensation follows a five step approach to the transcribed material, involving condensation of the expressed meanings into more and more essential meanings of negotiation. The aim is to finally capture the phenomenon's essence (Giorgio, 1975). One should, however, keep in mind that there are certain perils associated with searching for an essence common to different answers. Working from the assumption that there must be an essence one may perhaps easily lose sight of the differences that possibly point to its negation. Instead of an essence common to all the participants' uses of the term "negotiation", this term or their use of it may represent a cluster of family resemblances denoted by the same word[8]. In other words, it is important not to let the interpretation of the material be led by a preconception that there is an essence. Whether or not there is an essence and what it may possibly be is, rather, the question at hand.

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[8] Wittgenstein, albeit in a different context, expressly warns of this peril in his description of the different uses of the word "game". Cf. Wittgenstein, (1997).

The purpose of the questions asked in the interview was to aggregate as much information about the concept of negotiation as possible. The concept was attacked from different angles by questions formulated in different ways in order to reach a deeper understanding of the concept's substance. However, what each informant has in fact answered on each specific question and what he has not answered on a specific question but rather "saved" for later on in the interview, is perhaps something that should be discussed with regard to the possible implication this has for the present analysis (cf. Question 3).

Many of the answers of many of the informants are thematically similar. However, these thematically similar answers were given as replies to different questions in the interview. Even though different answers were given to the same questions, looking at the entirety of the interviews they all communicate the same thematic content. Seeing the interview in its totality reveals that many of the informants did in fact report the same things. Consequently, comparing answer with answer chronologically without regards to the totality of the interviews gives a different impression of the data material than comparing entire interviews with each other. What does this imply and is it important?

One could simply assume that the informants mean what they say when they say it. For instance, when asked about the existence of a common core, a structure or components that can be identified in all negotiations, one of the informants answers that the most important part is that one is able to expose trust of oneself and the team, and to build trust in the opponent and the opponent's story. Another informant focuses on the importance of formal structure of the setting, and how having good communicative skills is the most important component in negotiation. However, in reply to a later question – what makes a good negotiator – this informant emphasises trust: *The key word must be trust; a person who manages to build trust in all camps is for me a good negotiator*. One could question whether this implies that the second informant disagrees with the first informant in what a common core in negotiation is. That the common core is the formal structure and the communication skills, and the ability to evoke trust is what makes someone a good negotiator. Is this seeming disagreement grounded in an essential difference in each informant's interpretation of what negotiation is? Or is it just the result of a coincidence; being primed differently both in time and place could manifest itself in different streams of consciousness and patterns of association arguably resulting in different answers being made regardless of the question asked?

When confronted with a question, different patterns of associations are stimulated, and this stimulation activates the relevant knowledge of the theme in question. What a person decides to answer depends on the available knowledge activated in this person and the evaluation this person makes of what could be a pertinent and interesting answer. When allowed to elaborate more or less freely on a topic, what will be in focus depends on the person. A reason why the different interviews are to such a large degree thematically similar despite the dissimilarities in each of the informants answers to the questions, can be explained by the differences in each of the informants' patterns of association depending on how effective and spontaneous they recognise and communicate information. Dependent on the individual subject, as thoughts and associations continuously are brought to mind, each informant will more and more eagerly feel the need to put his ideas across to the interviewer – perhaps without direct relation to the original question or because of the openness allowed by the way the question is presented. Consequently this gives different answers from each of the informants on the same question without this necessarily reflecting any essential differences in how one understands what negotiation is. Additionally, there is the possibility of the informants deliberately saving some answers for later. One of the informants did in fact interrupt himself when giving an answer to a question with the suggestion that he perhaps should save it for later.

Another feature of the interviews is that they differ in regard to which part of the interview provided the most information. The interviews can be distinguished according to whether they provided front-heavy or back-heavy transcriptions (Kvale, 1996), and the fact that this difference emerged favours the inclusion of the interview in its entirety and not just parts of it being analysed in the present study. For instance, one informant gave a thorough and detailed answer early in the interview on one of the first questions that opened up for more extensive elaborations[9]. This resulted in the informant inevitably repeating himself later on in the interview. This could perhaps bear witness of a badly structured interview guide had it not been for another informant representing the opposite namely a back-heavy transcription – and also that each of these two occupied the opposite extremity while the four remaining informants placed themselves in between. This second informant was slower to warm up and

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[9] *Question 3: Can you visualize and verbalize a newly experienced negotiation you have participated in, and please be as detailed and specific as possible?*

gave a shorter and less detailed answer to the same question. However, more and more details and new information appeared towards the end of the interview.

*The Findings in the Present Study*

As one examines the statements comprising of what the informants have had in common, one will perhaps learn that different views emerge depending on how one interrogates the material. What seem to be the most central feature changes as one continue to ask new questions and focus on other themes. However, as the following discussion of the results of the present study shows, two main findings emerge. First, how negotiation can be looked upon as a process where two or more parties move towards finding and owning a common solution by the means of communication. In other words that negotiation is characterised by three themes; negotiation is a process, the solution must be common, and the importance of communication. The second finding is how these three themes are themselves distinguished by specific situational, inter-personal, and personal characteristics. These three groups of characteristics sum up what is to be understood as the substance of the structure in the first finding.

The three themes presented above are all present in the common definition stated by the informants; *Negotiation is when two parties or more must find and own a common solution through the means of communication*. If one relates this finding to the previous discussion regarding the relevance of asking for a definition (cf. Question 1), it seems as though the informants have been consistent during the interview. What they have emphasised as being the characteristics of negotiation is in fact what they have been elaborating on throughout their narratives. This initial common definition can therefore be regarded as somewhat pre-essential. Even though the three themes identified here can be regarded as principal units of negotiation by other definitions presented in other studies, what nevertheless makes these themes unique to the present study is how they constitute the core of the narratives and how the details add to it distinct substance.

Negotiation can be seen as a process in that the parties are ever moving towards something constituting an end state. This movement is intended; it has a goal and a purpose of reaching a solution of either an agreement, a disagreement or perhaps to end up with status quo. The different features of the process distinguished by the informants are what constitute the real findings of the condensations made in this analysis. The informants explain how *negotiation can be understood as a way of finding solutions by the means of exchanging demands and* *suggestions*, and how *the process of preparing oneself, and the excitement, uncertainty, and expectations regarding the result, and how understanding the result and the people involved, makes negotiation so fascinating*. The informants identify this process as one of the common cores in all negotiations: *The first being features of the negotiation process itself: a structure, a curve, a course, a point of no return, or certain activities*. Further, descriptions such as: *It is preferable to negotiate in small and well-coordinated groups. If many people are involved it simply complicates the negotiations by prolonging the process and making it more difficult to handle*, accentuate some distinctive features of this process. The informants' descriptions of how the use of strategies in a conscious manner is important in order to succeed during this process are an example of how personal characteristics can influence on this process; *an active use of strategies differentiates the competent negotiators from the incompetent*. However, as one can employ these strategies unknowingly the manner of negotiating can also be intuitive. According to the informants *actions or activities that some may define as being specific negotiation strategies can be obtained by others without the awareness of these being distinctive strategies. Negotiation can therefore be understood as something intuitive*.

The fact that the solution must be common to all the involved parties is another prominent theme. As reflected in the definition above, all parties must find and own a common solution. Such a statement is perhaps founded on a norm of decency. In some of the statements the informants argue that *it is important not to deceive each other and treat each other with respect,* and *the building of trust* is even one of the activities constituting a common core in negotiations. These are all normative statements arguing why the negotiations must result in a common solution. One could ask if this imply that the difference between the informants that disagree on what constitute a good negotiator reflects different adherence to this norm. *It is difficult to say what quality is most important in deciding what makes a good negotiator: either to be realistic in ones goal attainment or to commit oneself to high ambitions*. To be realistic in ones goal attainment is to accept the options given by the present situation and to set ones hopes according to what the situation can facilitate. This includes being considerate towards the opponent and the relationships between the parties. To commit one self to high ambitions, however, necessitates perhaps the action of pushing the limits of that specific situation and to extend the boundaries of the options at hand irrespective of the other party.

One should be aware of not interpreting what has been stated above in the way that it is the first negotiator who is being most decent. This is rather dependent on factors decided by the different situation and must be seen in relation to this. The first negotiator represents an attitude that is in accordance with what much theory within negotiation research defines as essential to the concept of “negotiation”, namely to find integrative solutions. The other negotiator, however, represents another way of understanding negotiation; as an activity of bargaining that implies that one participant gains what the other loses. Much theoretical literature treats “negotiation” and “bargaining” as one (cf. Rangarajan, 1985; Goldman & Rojot, 2003). The difference between the informants in the present study, however, represents perhaps an argument in favour of separating these two lines of action. The situations are in fact different and a consequence of this difference manifest itself in what can be defined as the essential features of negotiation – what is essential in negotiation depends on the negotiation situation. The informants explain that *the common cores in negotiations are dependent on the underlying motives for negotiating – either if you negotiate because you have to or if you negotiate because you want to*. The attitude of the first negotiator discussed above is perhaps representative of the situation where the underlying motive for negotiating is that you have to, and the second negotiator a representing of the second situation motivated to negotiate because he wants to. The differences between the situations can then be said to influence whether or not a common solution always should be the prominent goal, and the importance of not deceiving each other is perhaps more a result of the fact that the parties often are in a longstanding relationship with each other rather than anyone being more decent than the other.

Other examples of how the specific situation influences the understanding of negotiation is, for instance, *when* the informants consider it to be necessary to negotiate: *Negotiation can take place on all arenas but it depends on the situation; that is we may negotiate with anyone but not all the time*. What arena one finds oneself in is also important regarding whether or not it makes sense to talk of experts within negotiation. According to the informants *there are experts in negotiation but these are mostly within specific domains*. Additionally, how the informants view the involvement of a mediator depends both on the specific situation, the personal characteristics of the particular mediator, and how good the match between the characteristics of the parties and that of the mediator is. *A mediator must be used wisely; it is, however, necessary to separate the situations where a mediator is imperative and the situations in which the parties are allowed to decide for themselves*. Consequently also the statement that *one must take time to get to know the opponents and to make careful inquiries in order to ascertain that the foundations provide for a solution* will to some degree depend on the different negotiation situations. Still, all the informants agree on the importance of always being well prepared: *Most importantly is the preparations you make, they must be thorough and solid. However, one can never guard against all instances* because as they explain *there can be uncontrollable factors within the different situations that may prevent a solution.*

Communication is the third theme distinguished based on the common narratives of the informants. Communication is considered the means in order to reach a common solution and ownership among the parties. According to the informants *the way one communicates and the efforts made in trying to avoid misunderstandings* is an act by the negotiator that constitutes the second category of common cores in negotiation. Managing the communication process is necessary since *negotiating in teams is becoming more and more usual* and the informants have explained how *one must manage the interaction within ones own team in parallel with the interaction with ones opponent*. How this communication is carried out is perhaps illustrated in the following statement: *Negotiation can be looked upon as a game where time plays a vital role, and one must know the rules* – one must be aware of how one communicates and what one communicate when. The timing can be crucial, and the process is guided by rules. The informants perhaps state one of these rules in the following: *Pushing ones own and others' limits of perseverance often results in poor solutions*.

The different statements presented and discussed in the above, capture what the informants have in common in their experiences with negotiation. What they have in common can be distinguished as the two main findings in this study. The first is that negotiation is characterised by three themes: it is 1) a process geared towards a 2) common solution by the means of 3) communication. These three themes are to be regarded as the common form of the different statements of the informants. Secondly, these three themes are themselves distinguished by specific situational, inter-personal, and personal characteristics. These different characteristics are the matter of the form stated above. Research that does not take into consideration that these themes are dependent on such characteristics is in danger of overlooking important differences. Some of these differences are further elaborated on in the following section.

# Discussion

*Comparing the Present Findings with Negotiation Theory*

Having made the reflections above, the findings compiled out of the analyses made in the present research will be discussed in relation to main theoretical currents within negotiation research as mentioned in the introduction. One of the informants explains his understanding of negotiation much in the same way as presented in the introduction to this paper (Kremenyuk, 2002) by focusing on the many fields in which negotiation is a part:

"In my understanding negotiation is much like a big potato; as I already have mentioned negotiation is psychology, sociology, law, sales technique, rhetoric, all of which are combined into one. Therefore, what I usually tell the participants at my course is that what I am about to tell you is something that you already know, but I am going to present it in a structured way in order for all the pieces to fall in place."

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper it is possible to differentiate between some main perspectives which have dominated much of the research on negotiation (Carnevale and Pruitt, 1992). Recent scholarly activity has focused more on how for instance goals, motivation and strategy are interrelated – how strategies predict outcomes of negotiation and how motivation predicts strategic choice, and how emotions and social relationships influence on the negotiation process. According to the descriptive statement summarising the experiences of the informants above, it is important to distinguish between the different situations. The specific situation-, inter-person-, and person characteristics of the negotiation process influence on the choice of strategies, motivations, and what the results of the process will be.

The study of motivation in negotiation differentiates between four mutually exclusive orientations: the individualistic orientation, the altruistic orientation, the cooperative orientation, and the competitive orientation. The individualistic perspective has dominated the field much as a result of the assumption in all mathematical models of the individualistic oriented negotiator. In reality, however, many negotiators are cooperatively or competitively oriented but seldom altruistic (Carnevale and Pruitt, 1992). This difference between a cooperatively and a competitively orientation is illustrated by the two informants discussed earlier in the descriptive statement. To be realistic or to be ambitious are manifestations of different motivational orientations. However, as the informants have explained the choice of motivation is somewhat determined by the specific situation. For instance working relationships have a pronounced effect on tactical choice in negotiation, both between individual negotiators and between groups. This is explained by the informants as whether or not they are in a longstanding relationship with their opponents. Such an effect is also supported by other researchers (e.g. Pruitt, 2002).

In the study of strategy in negotiation, three main strategies have been extensively focused on. Concession making or yielding, involves reducing one's demands or aspirations to accommodate the other party. The informants have focused among others on the importance of timing in concession making. Knowing when to give what is an essential knowledge for any good negotiator. Contending involves trying to persuade the other party to yield. Specific tactics here include threats and commitments not to concede. None of the informants have reported having experienced such tactics. They have instead stressed the importance of respecting the opponent and the building of trust since the milieu is small and transparent. Problem solving involves trying to locate options that satisfy both parties' goals by the means of tactics such as active listening, providing information about one's own priorities, and brainstorming in search of solutions (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). A prominent feature of the informants' statements is the importance of communication. In order to satisfy both parties' goals – or as the informants have explained it, to find and own a common solution, good communicative abilities are important. Additionally, the informants have explained the negotiation process consisting of both yielding and problem solving in order to reach a solution. This is also supported by theory (e.g. Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992).

The research on emotions in negotiation has the focus on for instance the importance of creating positive affect in order to encourage cooperation and problem solving (Hollingshead & Carnevale, 1990), is something the informants have reported as important. To spend time attempting to create positive affect in the initial phases of the negotiation process, especially if the parties have never met before, is important in order to establish a good climate. The rationale for such preparations is supported by research on mood and how for instance positive mood produces less critical reactions and more compliance than negative mood. Positive moods tend to increase negotiators tendencies to select a cooperative strategy and enhance their ability to find integrative gains (Bazerman et al, 2000). Other research has examined the impact of intense emotions on negotiation for instance how angry negotiators are less accurate in their judgement of the interests of the other part, negative emotions arising from a negative relationship make negotiators more self-centered in their preferences, and anger may provoke a sequence of retaliatory impulses and behaviours (Thompson et al, 2004). Perhaps this is a reason why negotiations so often are assisted by a mediator, too often according to the informants. As the negotiation comes closer to a time limit agreed on by the parties themselves or set by a mediator, the intensity of emotions is rising, and the parties are decreasingly able to communicate and find a common solution.

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction the new social psychology of negotiation still includes a backdrop of rationality and among its strengths the cognitive approach emphasises information gathering prior to decisions. Researchers have found that negotiators when they generate and screen alternatives use a search model consisting of sets of goals and requirements both of the other negotiator as well as one's owns (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Such preparations are crucial according to the informants in order to succeed in negotiations and are one of the most prominent features of what makes a good and competent negotiator.

The discussion above involves some of the main focuses in the present research on negotiation. Still the study of negotiation is diverse. Perhaps some of the difficulties that emerge when one try to make sense of such a complex and much faceted theoretical area is the same as when one examines the statements comprising what the informants have had in common. One will learn that different perspectives or traditions emerge as the one most central or the one most influencing depending on how one interrogates the material. Perhaps one should rather settle with one of the statements from the informants: *Being familiar with negotiation theory is an advantage but the lived experience obtained by engaging in negotiations is decisive in order to be good*. Knowing the theoretical field of negotiation is important in order to understand how this concept is evolving. Still, it can be argued that it is just as important to keep close contact with the community of negotiators actively employing their knowledge of negotiation on a daily basis in order to understand what is at all times essential to negotiation. This is what the present study may be an example of.

*Concluding Remarks*

In the research presented here, nine different themes are reflected on by a group of six professional negotiators. Condensed meaning units are defined and discussed, and then stated reduced and shortened, comprising what the informants' narratives was seen to have in common. A descriptive statement represents the condensed meaning of these narratives, and it has revealed an essence of negotiation as it is experienced and understood by these professional negotiators.

The present study has two main findings. First, how negotiation can be looked upon as a process where two or more parties move towards finding and owning a common solution by the means of communication. In other words, that negotiation is characterised by three themes; negotiation is a process, the solution must be common, and the importance of communication. The second finding is how these three themes are themselves distinguished by specific situational, inter-personal, and personal characteristics. These three groups of characteristics sum up what is to be understood as the substance of the structure in the first finding. Research that does not take into consideration that these themes are dependent on such characteristics is in danger of overlooking important differences. For instance, the features of bargaining and the features of negotiations aiming for integrative solutions are different in important ways. These differences are illustrated through the informants' statements. For instance, focus on integrative solutions can be seen as a function of the temporal horizon; when negotiation is part of a longstanding relationship it is in the involved parties' interest to be considerate of each others' needs, whereas the parties in a bargaining situation typically have a shorter temporal horizon and need not consider so much the possibility that something may backfire in the future. The fact that the three themes of negotiation are distinguished by features relative to situation and person entails that it is difficult to give a heterogeneous definition.

Further research within a similar methodological tradition could perhaps take a closer look on how narratives from experienced negotiators within areas of bargaining are different or similar to the narratives of negotiators within other domains of negotiation. This could facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the movement towards a solution by means of communication as stated by the present informants.

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# *Appendix A*

## *Intervjuguide til bruk ved samtaler med Forhandlingsfolk*

**Intro:**

Takk for at du har tatt deg tid til en prat med oss. Som studenter har vi kunnskap om forhandling gjennom det fagbøker kan formidle. Samtidig oppleves det intuitivt at forhandlig er en kunst som beherskes på sitt beste ved/gjennom å samle seg erfaring. Vi er i gang med et hovedoppgaveprosjekt der vi skal skive om forhandling, og vi ønsker med dette å få førstehånds (ekspertise)kunnskap og erfaring med hva nettopp du opplever å være essensen i forhandling. (det kan tenkes at noen av spørsmålene virker som om de gjentas, men dette er for å sikre at vi dekker alt vi kan).

Dataene vi samler inn i dette intervjuet vil bli anonymisert, de vil bli oppbevart etter gjeldende forskrifter sikkert, og de vil ikke brukes senere til andre formål i andre sammenhenger.

Er du komfortable med at vi bruker båndopptager under intervjuet? Dette er for at vi bedre skal være i stand til å dokumentere gangen i samtalen og alt som blir sagt. Opptakene vil bli destruert før slutten av prosjektet vårt (dvs. mai 2007). Dersom du ikke er komfortabel med båndopptaker er dette naturligvis helt i orden.

Du står i tillegg fritt til på et hvilket som helst tidspunkt, å trekke deg fra intervjuet uten å måtte oppgi noen grunn, og be om at båndopptageren stoppes og at dataene destrueres.

Før vi begynner kunne du tenke deg å signere på et informert samtykke der du bekrefter at du har blitt informert om hva som skal foregå, hvordan dataene vil bli behandlet, og at du er blitt fortalt at du på et hvilket som helst tidspunkt kan velge å trekke deg fra intervjuet, eller be om at båndopptageren stanses og dataene destrueres?

14) I hvor mange år har forhandling vært en del av ditt arbeid?

15) Og primært innenfor hvilket felt?

16) Hva er, i følge deg, forhandling, kunne du definert det?

17) Hva liker du ved forhandling?

18) Tenk på en konkret forhandlingssituasjon du selv har vært i nylig:
    a. Beskriv hvordan du forberedte deg, hva du tenkte på i forkant av forhandlingen
    b. rapporter alt, fortell hele situasjonen, ta med så mange detaljer som mulig
    c. beskriv situasjonen fra et annet synspunkt enn ditt eget

19) Vil du si at det er mulig å snakke om en kjerne i forhandling? Finnes det ulike komponenter/en struktur/matrise?
    a. Hvis ja; hva tror du denne består av? Hvis du kunne beskrive kjernen i en hvilken som helst forhandlings-situasjon med kjerne begreper, hvilke ord/begreper ville disse være?
    b. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke?

20) I hvor stor grad tar parter i en forhandling bevisst i bruk ulike strategier?
    a. Hvilke strategier har du erfart?
    b. Gjør det da forhandlingssituasjonen forutsigbar?
    c. Kan du beskrive et eksempel på dette?

21) Har du en fast forhandlingsstrategi?
    a. En plan eller et format eller noen rammer som du alltid bruker?
    b. Baserer du deg på noen former for teorier/metoder/strategier?

22) Innledningsvis sa vi at studenter kjenner forhandling gjennom teori og bøker de har lest, og i innledning til veldig mange av disse bøkene kommer man med utsagnet: ”Alle forhandler vi med hverandre hele tiden”? Er du enig i denne påstanden?
    a. Hvorfor?
    b. Hva er det da som skiller de ulike situasjonene fra hverandre? (Egeninteresser/fellesinteresser/økonomiske interesser/andre hensyn? Usikkerhet/kontroll/makt/historie (har man forhandlet sammen før/mot hverandre før, hvor godt kjenner man hverandre osv).)

23) Hva er dine erfaringer med gruppesammensetning i forhold til:
    a. Gruppestørrelse
    b. Antall (forhandlings)parter
    c. Bruk av megler

24) Hva gjør (noen til) en god forhandler? (egenskaper/trekk/personlighet)

25) Anser du deg selv for å være en god forhandler? Ville du anse deg selv som en ekspert?
    a. Hvis ja; hvorfor, og hva vil du si at disse egenskapene består i?
    b. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke, og hvordan vil du i så fall definere ekspertisekunnskap om forhandlig? Kjenner du noen andre du heller ville karakterisere på denne måten?

26) Kan man lære noen til å bli en god forhandler?

Da er vi ferdige for i dag. Hvordan synes du at det gikk? (Gi personen anledning til å snakke om opplevelsen, en aldri så liten debrief).

Kunne du tenke deg å stille til nytt intervju dersom det skulle bli aktuelt? Eller bli kontaktet på en annen måte om vi har flere spørsmål?

Og kunne du tenke deg å stille til et eventuelt eksperiment dersom det blir nødvendig? Vi tenker oss da å invitere deg til å være en aktør i en forhandlingssituasjon der vi vil observere i den grad det lar seg gjøre, en virkelighetsnær forhandlingssituasjon med andre forhandlere. Disse seansene vil bli videotapet. Dersom du kunne tenke deg å delta i en slik situasjon, kontakter vi deg med ytterligere informasjon når tidspunktet nærmer seg.

Tusen takk for hjelpen! Ha en fin dag!

# Appendix B

## Prosessen for dataanalyse

Spørsmål 6: ”Er du enig i utsagnet om at vi alle forhandler med hverandre hele tiden?”

### *Fase 1: Temaet*

Merknad: Det som er markert med uthevet skrift er spørsmålet intervjueren stiller informanten.

I (intervjuer): **Kunne, eller innledningsvis sa jeg litt om det atte studenter forholder seg for det meste til fagbøker når det gjelder forhandling, og du sa litte granne om det du også da du snakket om hva forhandling var. Det står jo i innledningen til de aller fleste av disse bøkene og kapitlene om forhandling at ”Alle forhandler vi med hverandre hele tiden”. At forhandling er konstant, ikke sant.**

P (person): Ja ja

I: **Tror du, eller du har sagt litt om hva du syns om det men, men tror du det stemmer?**

P: (Pause)

I: Det går jo litt på bredden av definisjonen..

P: Ja, det går på bredden, riktig, akkurat. Nei, assa, jeg hører jo at de sier det men det er jo klart at, jeg reflekterte over det i går da vi diskuterte hvordan vi skulle gjennomføre jula hjemme i år.

I: Hja

P: Da følte jeg at jeg var i en forhandlingssituasjon. Og jeg måtte tenke meg litt om.

I: Ja

P: Så jeg tror nok at det med forhandling er veldig generelt, men assa det foregår innenfor ulike strukturer og arenaer. Og da må du tenke på hvilken arena du er på.

I: Mmm

P: Jeg bruker ikke samme teknikk hjemme overfor mine barn og kone, det gjør jeg ikke, men litt av den samme bevisstheten på at ta deg nå litt tid og lytte. Det er nesten sånn at man er en person når man er hjemme og en på jobb.

I: Ja

P: Så her er jeg veldig forståelsesfull på jobb for det er jo jobben min men når jeg kommer hjem så er jeg ikke like forståelsesfull. Så det må jeg gradvis dividere. Men det går assa, og det er nå der, men jeg tror nok at det med forhandling er ganske generelt

I: hja

P: i forhold til det der kommunikasjonsgreia, vi driver mer inne i en tradisjon, en struktur, med tydelige roller, og tydelige spillereglene, det er spillereglene i arbeidslivet, det gjør nå at vi har noe å henge oss på. Men det er bare det at, for eksempel det at hvis en representer arbeidsgiverne så kan man være veldig god på regler og de greiene der, og det er klart at det er en fordel. Men sånn, til syvende og sist så koker det ned på den der diskusjon – kommunikasjonsbiten, forståelse, litt på spillet, assa, hvor lenge klarer man å holde på kortene? For å få motparten til å bli helt fortvilet for nå tikker klokka, så det er jo også litt strategi på det her i forhandlinger hvor man på en måte tester ut motparten på hva går det for deg, og så holde på i flere uker, og så plutselig så gir motparten seg fordi at de er lei eller fordi ok hvis det er det her som skal til så er det greit. Så det er litt sånn, det er litt spill oppe i det også, så det er ikke fullt så åpent og ærlig og alt, man holder kortene til brystet, og det er jo det som er forhandlingene; uvissheten, hadde alt vært klart på forhånd så hadde det vært mye enklere, men hele tiden den uvissheten hvor noen vil gjøre mer ut av et spill enn kanskje andre, og der kommer også forskjellige personer inn. For eksempel vi kan holde på å forhandle i tre og så er det noe som helst vil bli ferdig etter en uke, og så har vi de som vil drive spillet helt til tre uker og så vil de gå over grensa, og så vil de holde på enda litt til og kanskje da klarer de å få ut litt ekstra. Så det er det, det er forskjellig også blant advokater og andre også, det er mange måter å gjøre det på. Så det er litt avhengig av hvilke holdninger og verdenssyn man har på mange måter, hvordan man definerer sin rolle, man skal være så veldig flink eller, ja det er mange ting som spiller inn i dette her,

I: mmm

P: som driver den enkelte og deres egne ambisjoner

I: mmm, **og du føler da at det som skiller, hvis vi forhandler såpass mye hele tiden som vi gjør, så er det som skiller de forskjellige gangene er litt arenaen som du sa, og det å identifisere hvilken arena man er på nå og være den personen som man skal være i den arenaen?**

P: Ja.

I: Ja?

P: Ja, det kan du godt si. Men jeg føler på mange måter da at arbeidslivsforhandlingene er så strukturerte og tråkket opp en måte å gjøre det på at vi har noe å lene oss til der

I: hja
P: rollene er litt mer tydelige og, men igjen så koker det ned til den derre kommunikasjonsbiten igjen
I: ja, ikke sant
P: det er den som skal få løsninger på plass så du må beherske begge deler, både den strukturen og den arenaen du er inne i og den kommunikasjonsbiten for å få til den endelige løsningen.
I: Hja, nemlig.
P: Og ett eller annet sted så skjærer det seg på veien, som oftest.

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### *Fase 2: Meningsenheten*

Diskusjoner privat kan jeg oppleve som en forhandlingssituasjon. Det med forhandlinger er veldig generelt men det foregår innefor ulike strukturer og arenaer, og du må tenke på hvilken arena du er på. Jeg bruker ikke de samme teknikkene privat, men noe av den samme bevisstheten, for eksempel det å ta seg tid til å lytte. Man er en person hjemme og en person på jobb.

I forhold til det med kommunikasjon så forhandler man profesjonelt innenfor en tradisjon som gir struktur, tydelighet, og holdepunkter. Det som er forhandlinger er uvissheten hvor noen vil gjøre mer ut av spillet enn andre, hadde alt vært klart på forhånd hadde det vært enkelt. Her spiller forskjellene på personer inn: hvilke holdninger og verdenssyn man har og hvordan man definerer egen rolle, dette er det som driver den enkelte og deres ambisjoner.

Det som skiller situasjonene fra hverandre er hvilken arena man er på. Men uansett, det er den kommunikasjonsdelen som skal til for å få løsningen på plass når du behersker både strukturen og arenaen. Du må beherske alle tre. Og et sted på veien skjærer det seg som oftest.

### *Fase 3: Reduksjon av meningsenheten ved å finne temaer som dominerer meningsenheten*

Merknad: De ordene og setningene som er understreket er bærer av det temaet som dominerer meningsenheten.

Diskusjoner privat kan jeg oppleve som en forhandlingssituasjon. Det med forhandlinger er veldig generelt men det foregår innefor ulike strukturer og arenaer, og du må tenke på hvilken arena du er på. Jeg bruker ikke de samme teknikkene privat, men noe av den samme bevisstheten, for eksempel det å ta seg tid til å lytte. Man er en person hjemme og en person på jobb.

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### *Temaene blir til én redusert ytring som fanger essensen*

Ja, forhandling er veldig generelt. Forhandlingssituasjonene er forskjellige ved at de foregår innen ulike strukturer og arenaer. Kommunikasjonen er forskjellig. Dette må man være bevisst og alle tre må beherskes for å finne løsninger. Teknikkene privat er ulike teknikkene profesjonelt, men noe av bevisstheten er den samme. Profesjonelt forhandler man innenfor etablerte tradisjoner. Forhandling er uvissheten om hvordan de ulike personene spiller spillet.

## *Fase 4: Hver av forhandlernes redusert ytringer (fra fase 1 til 3) diskuteres ut i fra hva disse sier meg om hva forhandling er, og tilslutt slåes de sammen til én ytring*

Merknad: Det er først i denne fasen de ulike svarene til hver av forhandlerne slåes sammen. Alle ytringene er gjengitt under, markert i skriftstørrelse 10, og deretter slått sammen og diskutert i forhold til hverandre. Den siste ytringen markert i fet skrift består av essensen i det alle forhandlerne har svart på spørsmål 6.

Forhandling er mellom profesjonelle, familien derimot er rene mellommenneskelige relasjoner der diskusjonene og løsningene får et annet tilsnitt nemlig å inngå kompromiss. Forhandling er ikke alltid kompromiss og kan alltid inngås bare dersom det fører til større gevinst som del av et totalbilde.

Nei, jeg er bevisst på når jeg forhandler. Deler av forhandlinger kan være improvisert. Min forhandlingserfaring er forretningsbasert, personlige forhandlinger er ansettelser av medarbeidere. Forhandlinger kan også forekomme på andre områder, også privat.

Det er en for vid definisjon av begrepet. Forutsetningen her er at man gjør alt ut i fra egeninteresse og det er jeg ikke enig i. Forhandling forekommer profesjonelt og privat men i situasjoner hvor man forhandler ønsker man å oppnå noe for egen del, andre ganger ønsker man kun å gjøre noe for andre og da er det ikke forhandlinger.

Ja, men det er å trekke det litt langt. Mennesker har det i seg, noen også som en del av personligheten, å hele tiden forsøke å oppnå noe for egen del, og det er forhandlinger. Men dersom man ønsker å oppnå noe for andre er det ikke forhandling.

Ja, forhandling er veldig generelt. Forhandlingssituasjonene er forskjellige ved at de foregår innen ulike strukturer og arenaer. Kommunikasjonen er forskjellig. Dette må man være bevisst og alle tre må beherskes for å finne løsninger. Teknikkene privat er ulike teknikkene profesjonelt, men noe av bevisstheten er den samme. Profesjonelt forhandler man innenfor etablerte tradisjoner. Forhandling er uvissheten om hvordan de ulike personene spiller spillet.

Ja, alt du vil oppnå gjennom andre må du nødvendigvis forhandle om. Men det er forskjell på situasjonene mht maktfaktorer, og det resultatet du ønsker, og hvilke personer som er involvert. Dette bestemmer forhandlingstaktikken.

Forhandlerne kan sies å plassere seg på et kontinuum hvor det ene ytterpunktet utgjøres av én som avviser utsagnet i sin helhet, mens en annen plasserer seg i motsatt ytterpunkt og mener at all målrettet interaksjon med andre er forhandling. Den førstnevnte forhandleren avviser også at alt annet enn profesjonelle forhandlinger er forhandling. De fem andre skiller mer mellom situasjoner og arenaer, at man kan ønske å oppnå noe for egen del og da er det forhandlinger mens det å oppnå noe for andre ikke er det, og også at man kan forhandle både profesjonelt og privat.

**De aller fleste mener at forhandling kan forekomme på alle arenaer men at situasjonen avgjør: altså at vi kan forhandle med alle men at vi ikke gjør det hele tiden.**

*Fase 5: Én meningsessens skal trekkes ut av hva alle forhandlerne har svart til hvert av spørsmålene og utgjøres av det de har felles*

Merknad: Det er denne felles meningsessensen som hos Kvale (1996, p. 194) kalles en ”descriptive statement”. Denne felles deskriptive ytringen diskuteres så opp mot forhandlingsteori.